THOUGHTS ON THE COLLECTS FROM ADVENT TO TRINITY

E. ROMANES.

CANTEL

W. E. Gladstone

St. Deiniol's Library
Hawarden. Clwyd

Founded by
The Rt. Hon. W. E. Gladstone

SOC. S. JOH... ANGELIST.
MARSTON STREET,
OXFORD.

1/6

Spiritual

~~T. L. Wain.~~

G27/44

THOUGHTS

ON THE

Collects from Advent to Trinity

BY

ETHEL ROMANES

AUTHOR OF "THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF GEORGE JOHN ROMANES," "THE HALLOWING OF SORROW," "THOUGHTS ON THE COLLECTS FOR THE TRINITY SEASON," "THOUGHTS ON THE GOSPELS"

ST DAVID'S HAWARDEN LIBRARY

"Deus . . . Quem nosse vivere, Cui servire regnare est?"

A. R. MOWBRAY & CO. LIMITED.
OXFORD: 106, S. Aldate's Street;
LONDON: 34, Great Castle Street, Oxford Circus, W.
1905.

First Impression, 1900.
New Impression, 1905.

TO

A. A. M.

Advent, 1900.

Preface

THIS second set of Meditations on the Collects has been undertaken in deference to the wishes of one or two friends, for whose encouragement and sympathy the writer can never be sufficiently thankful. As before, these Meditations are only attempts to hand on to others what one has been taught by masters of the spiritual life, most of whom are the children of this Branch of the Church, and whose lives and teaching witness to her Catholicity, to her Life.

Thanks are again due to the Committee of *Hymns Ancient and Modern* for permission to quote hymns.

The quotations from Holy Scripture are, in the case of the Psalms, from the Prayer Book: in the other verses sometimes from the Revised Version, and sometimes from the Authorized.

E. R.

July, 1900.

PAGE

The Fifth Sunday in Lent 162
Palm Sunday 170
Good Friday 176
Easter Eve 182
Easter Day 185
The First Sunday after Easter 191
The Second Sunday after Easter 197
The Third Sunday after Easter 205
The Fourth Sunday after Easter 213
The Fifth Sunday after Easter 221
Ascension Day 227
Sunday after Ascension Day 234
Whit Sunday 240
Trinity Sunday 248
Saint Andrew's Day 256
Saint Thomas the Apostle 259
The Conversion of Saint Paul 262
The Purification of Saint Mary the Virgin . . . 266
Saint Matthias's Day 269
The Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary . . 272
Saint Mark's Day 275
Saint Philip and Saint James's Day 278

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

The Collect.

Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which Thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when He shall come again in His glorious Majesty to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal, through Him who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever. Amen.

Thought I.

"Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness."

Text.—"Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. xiii. 14, from the Epistle).

This is what Advent calls me to do. Do I believe in the life of the world to come? Then, surely, at times there will come into my soul a great longing to be "safe." Can I be safe? Yes. I have been put by God's grace at Baptism into such a state that if I will give myself to Him He will save me for ever.

Am I coming to Him for the first time? Then, what I have to do is to throw myself on Him, and ask Him to forgive me all the sins of my life, and—then—go on to pray this prayer. For no one can be saved who does not cast off sin.

And if I have turned to God, and am trying to serve Him, let me in this solemn season pray this prayer very earnestly. The "works of darkness." If I study St. Paul's and St. John's Epistles, I shall find sin often spoken of as darkness. Partly because those who live in sin get blind as far as their souls are concerned.

I must surely know what this means. There are many people who commit very great sins and do not know they are sinning. Is there any blindness in me? What work of darkness is there for me to cast off? Do I dislike any one so much that I will not be on speaking terms with him? "He that hateth his brother is in darkness," says St. John. Is there any habit of over-indulgence in food, drink? And purity, what of that? Nothing darkens the eye of the soul more than sins of the flesh. Perhaps I am sheltered from temptation to actual sin, but do I think as I should about these sins? Do I read books or see plays which make light of sin? Do I avoid conversation about sin; above all, jokes about sins of the flesh? Do I help other people to lead good lives? do I hinder them by my talk, by the way I arrange my house, by carelessness if I have people under me, or am the parent of children, or am in *any way* set over little children?

Or is there dishonesty in my life? Do I think it impossible to be true and just in all my dealings, in my daily life? All these are works of darkness. But our Master always wants us to be, to do, something. Jesus seldom says, "Do not do so and so," but rather, "Be what I command you, *do* what I command you."

And thus one is led on to the next clause, "And put upon us the armour of light."

Put on. So often one is told in the New Testament to put on goodness—to "*put* on Christ."

Yes, because little by little I am to become wholly

Christ's. I may remember a parable in which the Lord speaks of a man invited by a king to a marriage feast and cast out because he had not on a wedding garment. So will it be with all Christians who have not put on the garment of holiness and kept it. Bit by bit Jesus Christ will take all our bad, selfish nature, and give us His nature if we will let Him.

Here this robe is called armour. In old times soldiers wore coats of steel in battle, and this "the garment of holiness" is a shield against sin. Do I understand this? It is something in this way: if I am giving myself to Christ, He will give me the fruits of holiness. His strength will make me able to resist temptation. His purity will help me to shut my eyes and ears to foul sin, and so on.

O God, Who hast said that without holiness no man shall see Thee, make me, most unholy as I am, to be clothed in Christ's holiness.

"Before the dawning day
Let sin's dark deeds be gone;
The old man all be put away
The new man all put on." (48.)

Thought II.

"Now in the time of this mortal life, in which Thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility."

Text.—"And the Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us" (St. John i. 14).

It was to a life as lived by men, a life ending in death, that Jesus came. Do I ever think about the Lord's life on earth? Poverty, obscurity, lowliness. These He chose. "This mortal life." It may be that either now, or at some future time, I shall be tempted to think life very hard, very

puzzling, very sad. If only I can take home to myself that "as He is, so are we all in this world," that "the disciple is not above his Master"! Am I poor, worried about making both ends meet? The Lord has made poverty for ever blessed. It is very hard, and it is doubtful if God really means any of His children to be so poor that they have to work ten or twelve hours a day to keep body and soul together. He has said strong words about those who oppress the poor. But still if it is man's sin which oppresses me, let me remember man's sin brought Him to the cross. I must see if my armour of light will not help me to stand up against grinding tyranny, against sweating, and so on. But poverty which cannot be helped, and cares, and troubles of this mortal life, the Lord has borne them all, for me He will bear them *in* me.

Do I fear death? Surely I need not, if only I am His. Death is a great mystery, and all men have a natural shrinking from it; but if now or at any time I feel the dread, the horror of death, let me remember Jesus knows all about it.

Let me treasure up the thought of Jesus having borne this life for us, in dark days, and let me think of His humility. Does that word teach me anything? Do I long for notice, for popularity, for means to make a show? Do I despise working with my hands, or indeed any sort of work? Is there any striving in my life for that poverty of spirit which He said is blessed?

"The Everlasting Son
Incarnate deigns to be;
Himself a servant's form puts on
To set His servants free." (48.)

Thought III.

"That in the last day, when He shall come in His glorious majesty to judge both the quick and the dead."

Text.—"And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before the throne; and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Rev. xx. 12).

Do I ever think of a day when all, small and great, shall stand before God? All through the Bible judgments on people, on nations, on churches, and finally one great irrevocable judgment, are spoken of.

Judgments are seen in this life. A selfish life, full of wicked lusts, is sometimes seen to end in a lonely, unlovely and unloved old age.

And if I read history, I shall see the doom of ruin and decay falling on great nations, on once prosperous cities. Yes, and people will say, "Oh yes, but all these judgments came quite naturally." A man who drinks too much will often bring disease on himself, and so it happens often with people who indulge in any wicked lust. And certain countries, one seems to see, had *naturally*, so to speak, lost their prosperity. This is all quite true. Do I quite see that God is the God of all law? Laws of health and so on are the expression of His will just as much as the laws of right and wrong. He often chooses to work out His purposes by what we call natural laws. So possibly, when that last Judgment Day comes and the world is destroyed, it may seem as if some natural law had brought it about. We cannot say.

We know that Christ will come. Have I ever read the 25th of St. Matthew from the 31st verse? Let me read it again on my knees. Our Lord warns us in solemn words *how* we shall be judged.

What lesson can I learn? First: I should pray God to help me to judge my own life. Am I living at all as I shall wish one day to have lived? How will my likes, my dislikes, my pleasures, appear in the light of judgment? It is told of a saint who was playing billiards that on being asked what he would do if the last trump were to sound at that particular moment, replied, "Try to make a good stroke." Yes, because his games, his recreations, were done as much for the Master as his work. Can I say this of *my* pleasures?

Then judgments fall on nations, on churches. Yet these nations, these churches, are made up of single units.

And through the Old Testament we are told that God spares for the sake of a remnant—a few righteous people in a nation or in a church. Do I take home to myself, I am helping or hindering the cause of goodness in my country, in my branch of the Catholic Church, yes, helping to bring down or to avert God's judgments? Every man or boy who lives a pure, temperate life is helping to form the character of his countrymen. Every woman who is brave, modest, self-restrained, is helping to form the generation of the future. What then can be said of those who do not care, who disgrace themselves and others, who swagger about wars abroad and boast about their country's greatness and riches, and do nothing to get rid of the slavery of drink, of wicked sin, who set others bad examples?

What shall be their portion in the Day of the Lord? What am I doing to help my country? Do I pray to God for her? do I pray Him to turn away His judgments? Do I pray for myself that in that day He will be merciful to me?

"Ah, that day of tears and mourning!
From the dust of earth returning
Man for judgment must prepare him:
Spare, O God, in mercy spare him." (398).

Thought IV.

"We may rise to the life immortal, through Him Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost now and ever.'

Text.—"And this is life eternal, that they should know Thee, the only true God, and Him Whom Thou didst send, even Jesus Christ" (St. John xvii. 3).

Most people would like to be quite sure of happiness in the life beyond the grave. Most people, when a friend dies, say, "Poor thing! he (or she) is gone to a better place." But what does the Bible, what does Jesus Christ, teach about this life?

Our Lord tells us He is come to give us life.

Again, He tells us, that life is knowing God, and that eternal life begins here.

It is well for every one sometimes to take a moment's time to think about this life beyond the grave. Do I? I know I shall die: what is to become of me then? If I have had the seed of eternal life planted in me, if I have been growing closer to Christ, then this life will go on for ever. But do I think of God? The wish to please Him, the thought of Him—are they ever in my mind? Jesus Christ, by His rising from the dead, has given the promise, the certainty, of life. He joins every Christian to Himself in Baptism, and a Christian can go on increasing in life, or he can destroy that eternal life. Our Lord speaks not only of eternal life, but of eternal death. What does this

mean? Surely it means being shut out from God. What am I doing for the life of my soul? The life of my body is given me at my birth, but I have to feed that life, and sustain it in many ways. So it is with the life which begins at Baptism. God has given us many ways by which we may be fed, nourished, cleansed. If all these ways are neglected, if there is no prayer, no Holy Communion, and no Bible reading, no setting myself to put God into my life, can I really fancy that, when death comes, the thought of God will be anything but most terrifying?

The Collect speaks, however, of the Last Day and of our rising. Yes, we do not know much of what awaits us after death. We all die imperfect, and we all need cleansing, instruction, enlightenment. At the Last Day, we are told, (1 Cor. xv.) our new spiritual bodies will be given us, and the redeemed shall stand before Him perfected and glorious.

Does this thought of my new body make me reverent to this body? It has been thought that according to the treatment our earthly bodies have received so will be our spiritual bodies. We may be making them new. At any rate, as Mr. Gore says (*Creed of a Christian*, p. 45), resurrection bodies we shall have—for good, and must I not say for evil also? Yes, the body which has been defiled by sin will be our condemnation. Let me remember this, and treat all that concerns the body with care. There are very wonderful words about the body in the Holy Communion. "The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy *body* unto eternal life."

It is very hard to think of these heavenly things when one is living a very busy life, perhaps among people who lead one into temptation by evil talk, evil examples. Do I feel this? Let me pray this prayer. God does care, Jesus wants *me*, yes *me*, to have life; the Holy Spirit will come again and again, if only I will pray.

"When Thy summons we obey,
On the dreadful Judgment Day,
Let no fear our soul dismay;
Hear us, Holy Jesu.

"While the lost in terror fly,
May we see with joyful eye
Our Redemption drawing nigh;
Hear us, Holy Jesu.

"May we see Thee on Thy Throne
As the Saviour we have known,
And have followed as our own;
Hear us, Holy Jesu.

"May we then, among the blest,
Who Thy Name on earth confessed,
Hear Thee calling us to rest;
Hear us, Holy Jesu." (463.)

THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

The Collect.

Blessed Lord, Who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of Thy holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which Thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Thought I.

"Blessed Lord, Who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning."

Text.—"Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning" (Rom. xv. 4).

The Holy Bible. The book we often speak of as the Holy Writings, the Scriptures. I, of course, know the book. What do I think about it? The Bible is, I know, a collection of many books, written at various times and by very different people. There is the Old Testament, there is the New. Let me try and grasp these facts.

1 All through the Bible there is one connecting link. All the books in lesser or greater degree point to Christ. The Law, the Prophets, bear witness of Him. The New Testament tells us about Him and about the kingdom which He set up.

2. The Bible is not meant to be used "to give people

their first ideas of religion." Do I ever take pains to notice how the Apostles taught the first Christians, what the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews calls the "first principles of the doctrine of Christ"? By word of mouth those who came to be prepared for Baptism were taught; and the truths about God and our Lord were drawn up in a short summary—the Creeds. By degrees the Gospels were written, that, as St. Luke said, Christians might know the certainty of the things which they had been taught. And Epistles or Letters were written by several Apostles to teach or enforce some particular truth "for their learning." But always Christians were to test all they were taught by the Scripture. The Apostles were continually quoting the Old Testament—the Psalms, and Prophets—to show how Jesus had fulfilled them.

As a great teacher continually reminds us, "The Church is to teach, the Bible to prove."[1]

I shall see how I can use the Bible in the Thoughts that come after this. Only let me remember that I must never listen to people who found any teaching on single texts. The more I study the teaching of the Church, the Creed, the Services, or the Sacraments, the more I shall come to see how well they agree with what has been taught us by the Apostles.

What the Bible does teach me, if only I will read it, is the mind of God, His purpose, His laws, His love.

"Lord, Thy Word abideth,
And our footsteps guideth;
Who its truth believeth
Light and joy receiveth." (243.)

[1] *Creed of a Christian*, p. 63.

Thought II.

"Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them."

Text.—"Thy Word is a lantern unto my feet; and a light unto my paths" (Ps. cxix. 105).

The words of the Collect for this day's Thought bring out *how* to use the Bible.

"Read." What is my rule about Bible reading? have I any? If not, let me make one. If I have very little time, and reading over these Thoughts is all I can do, let me make some rule as to a bit of Bible reading at night—on Fridays and Saturdays, and, above all, Sundays. Some of us are not so very hurried in the morning, and we may perhaps make a rule to read one of the Lessons and one of the Psalms, or less than this. And on Sundays it is a capital plan to have a little bit of quiet time for Bible reading. Perhaps to read a whole Epistle through, or such a portion as the Sermon on the Mount, or some of the chapters of the Gospel of St. John. And we should always read the Gospel for the day if we are so unhappy as not to be present at Holy Communion. But whatever our plan is, the great point is, to have a rule about Bible reading; it may be only a verse in the morning, and a little more some other times, but a rule we must have.

"Hear." Do I listen in Church and try to follow the Psalms, Lessons, and, above all, the Epistle and Gospel? It is such a good plan to take my Bible to Church and follow the Lessons. It is sad to see people paying no attention to God's Word. No other branch of Christ's Church reads so much Scripture in her services as our own Church does. Every morning and evening in the year has its own Psalms and Lessons; every week there is a fresh Epistle and

Gospel. I could not have a better rule for Bible reading than to read part of what the Church orders for her children each day. Supposing I have some days when I am not too busy, do I ever think of going to Church in the week and joining in the daily Prayers, the Psalms, the Lessons? Why not? My holidays would refresh me more if I gave some time to God.

"Mark." Pay attention. Alas, how few of us do that enough! We get puzzled; but if we will only take our Bibles, and pray, God's Word would give us light! I am perhaps very sad and lonely. Where shall I find such comfort as in reading our Lord's words in St. John, or indeed in any Gospel?

I feel angry with some one, and make up my mind to pay that person out. If I had *marked* God's Word, I should remember the Lord's command to forgive.

I grumble at disappointments, pain, sickness. If I marked God's Word, I should find out much about taking up one's cross and following Christ.

I hear people talking lightly of holy marriage. God's Word, if I will only mark it, says that no one can put asunder those whom God has joined, and that for a person to marry again when the first husband or wife is alive is to commit adultery.

Or I hear people laughing at drunkenness or treating sins of the flesh as "mere nothing," only of consequence if they are found out. Yet the Bible says in very clear words that such sins unrepented of shut people out of heaven.

"Learn." This means, I suppose, not learning by heart only, but getting to understand. Learning the Bible by heart is a most helpful practice. Could I not set myself to learn Psalms, parts of the Gospels? A little Prayer Book or Testament in one's pocket takes up so little room, and one does get odd five minutes in the day.

"And inwardly digest them." Ah, that is the point. When one has so marked and paid attention to God's Word, so that one can apply its laws, its promises, its warnings to one's own life, then one has begun to inwardly digest it, so that, as wholesome food nourishes our bodily life, so the food of God's Word will help to feed the life God gives and renews in the soul.

"Meditation." That is thinking over, praying over, God's Word and truths. I must not be frightened by this Word. These readings are meant to put me in the way of thinking over holy words, above all God's Word, by the help of others or by myself.

The daily reading of a book like this, or of a book of simple thoughts on Bible words, of which there are many, will lead me to taking a Gospel, or Epistle, or Psalm, verse by verse, and to pray over it. Such reading as this should always be prayed over; these poor unworthy Thoughts should be turned into prayers. May it please the Holy Spirit more and more to take of the things of Christ and show them to *me*.

It is by these quiet times, perhaps five minutes in the early morning, that God in His love teaches us to know Him.

"O that we discerning
Its most holy learning,
Lord, may love and fear Thee,
Evermore be near Thee." (243.)

Thought III.

"That by patience and comfort of Thy holy Word."

Text.—"And let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing" (St. James i. 4).

"O THINK UPON THY SERVANT AS CONCERNING THY WORD: WHEREIN THOU HAST CAUSED ME TO PUT MY TRUST. THE SAME IS MY COMFORT IN MY TROUBLE; FOR THY WORD HATH QUICKENED ME" (Ps. cxix. 49, 50).

"Patience and comfort." These are to lead us on. Patience first. I shall find, if I have set myself to serve God, if my will is turned to God, that I shall have great need of patience; endurance, the power to *bear*. First, with myself. Sometimes when one first makes up one's mind to follow Jesus, He gives one great joy, and one is so apt to think: "After this, my Confirmation, my talk with some servant of God, or my first confession; or it may be after something in my life, a sorrow, or a joy, I cannot fall again." And very soon the old temptation to idleness, to ill temper, it may be to lust or drunkenness, comes back; and if one yields, patience must be used. God is so patient. It was very bad to lie in bed and not get up in time for one's prayers, one's Communions; tell Him how bad you know it was, and try again more humbly. And it is just the same with one's temper, one's wicked wishes. Patience, patience, to try again.

Patience, too, one must pray God to give one in trouble. It is very sad to see how fretful, how impatient, Christian people, communicants, are when God sends them troubles, disappointments about their plans, sickness.

"Comfort of Thy holy Word." Comfort means more than merely to soothe. It means to *encourage*, to make strong. God gives *comfort* to His children in many ways; but this week I am trying to think of the use He means me to make of the Bible. The comfort which I may grow to find in the Bible is far beyond what I can imagine before I have learned to love the Bible.

In the Bible I shall find reproof, and warnings, and encouragement, and hope. If only I will try and enter into the meaning of the Psalms, I shall find this out. The next time I am feeling very sad, let me try and kneel in a quiet place, and say over the 42nd Psalm, or the 130th, or the 143rd. The next time I want to thank God let me try to say the 103rd. I may have to be with some one who is dying, I may be lying ill, near to death, myself. What words will help the dying Christian so much as the 23rd Psalm, "The Lord is my Shepherd"? or the loving words of the living Lord, "Come unto Me," "In My Father's house are many mansions"? I should have a storehouse of such comfort ready.

Or, if I am oppressed by my sins, or some one else's sins (if I grow in Christ's life, sin will make me very sad—my own sins, the sins of others), Psalm 51 is the very soul of sorrow for sin. And this comfort is not meant for some special time only; no, for every-day use, in every-day troubles. To learn to use one's Bible in this way will be to grow daily in oneness with Jesus. This week's Collect seems, like a great deal of the Prayer Book, only meant to be prayed by converted Christians. I cannot use God's Word rightly if I am not a Christian. Am I? Am I trying to please God? Do I feel I want to try? Do I want Him to forgive me and give me patience, comfort, joy, as St. Paul prays further on in the Epistle.

"Word of mercy, giving
Succour to the living;
Word of life, supplying
Comfort to the dying." (243.)

Thought IV.

"We may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which Thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ."

Text. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing" (Rom. xv. 13, part of Epistle).

"Embrace." To take to myself, have as my very own, and hold so fast that it can never go, never be torn from me. I perhaps feel that this hope of everlasting life is not very much to me yet, and, indeed, that all unseen things—God and heaven and the life of my soul—are not nearly so real as the things of earth—work, pleasure, money. But do I want to have this hope? do I want to think more of God, of holy things? Day by day, if this is so, He will make me care more and more for the unseen things which, as S. Paul says, are eternal.

I must not think that this hope of everlasting life is to make me careless about my life. No. God means us to use this world, and all we have in this world, so that our everlasting life may begin here. Work, often so hard, sometimes so delightful, earthly loves, pleasures and sorrows, are all to lead us to Him. And this thought of everlasting life is not one which will make us think much about being rewarded. When one is very, very young in the Christian life, one may think rather unworthily of what is to be ours hereafter. Some people fancy very strange things about heaven, as if it were to be a sort of glorified earth, where what one had missed here below of riches and pleasures would be made up to one. But when one is taught by the Spirit, one rises by degrees to understand that to know God is life, and that seeing Him as He is, is heaven. The

more Christians learn this, the more they lose all selfish thoughts; they, as St. John says, "purify themselves."

And this hope comes through our Saviour. I may not yet be able to take to myself all that the hope of everlasting life means. But I can, if only I will, take to myself and hold fast the truth that my whole, my only hope is—Jesus Christ. Because He became one of us, and died, and rose, and ascended, all joy, all hope may be mine. Do I know Him? Is He my Lord? is He my Saviour?

One more thought. I am to hold this hope fast. It is not always easy. Faith and hope sometimes seem dead. Then let me not let *love* die. Let me try and do something for some one else; let me pray to God, go to Communion, read my Bible, and I shall find I have been holding fast my hope. I must turn to His holy Word in dark hours of sorrow, and by degrees the Holy Spirit will bring to me the comfort of the holy Word.

It may be hard sometimes. I may be among people who try to upset my faith, to take my hope. I may hear arguments which I cannot answer. Those are times when God's Word will comfort me, if it is only by showing me that such trials are just what Christians should expect. It is well to be prepared for such times. Is my life one which will make me ready? Let me now, for the end of my Thoughts on this Collect, pray God to show me how to use the Bible more. I might try, if I have not a rule already about Bible reading, ask God the Holy Ghost to show me how to make one.

"O that we discerning
Its most holy learning,
Lord, may love and fear Thee,
Evermore be near Thee." (243.)

THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

The Collect.

O Lord Jesu Christ, Who at Thy first coming didst send Thy messenger to prepare Thy way before Thee; grant that the ministers and stewards of Thy Mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready Thy way, by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at Thy second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in Thy sight, Who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Thought I.

"O Lord Jesu Christ, Who at thy first coming didst send Thy messenger to prepare Thy way before Thee."

Text.—"The voice of one crying in the wilderness" (St. John i. 23).

If I have forgotten St. John Baptist's history, I shall do well to read St. Luke i. and the Gospels for to-day and next Sunday.

He had a great vocation: the preparation of men's hearts to receive Christ; yet he only spoke of himself as a voice crying out.

Christ came once on earth, and for that coming there had been long preparation of the world, and finally one man was chosen to prepare such of his nation as would listen,

just as that nation had prepared the world. But Christ is always coming into the hearts of those who will receive Him. Christ is always being preached to peoples and nations who know Him not. And most often He sends messengers before Him. In a heathen country very often there is a long preparation before that country will accept Christ. It was so with our own England, it seems to be so with India now.

And to separate persons Christ often sends messengers who do something to prepare the way. If I am turned to God, He may use me in this way. Sometimes in a household there is but one person who tries at all to please God, who is really converted. It may be one of the servants, or it may be one of the children, or the mother. That one person does not do anything at all like preaching; but he or she is gentle, pure, willing to be put out, to take trouble for others, very careful about prayers and Communion, though perhaps so young and untaught as not to know much, perhaps not even yet a communicant, but *loving* Christ. There is a messenger. Perhaps years after some one who belonged to that household is helped by the remembrance of something which that messenger did or said, and finds it possible to believe in Christ, to take Christ for his or her master.

Sometimes one meets people by chance, as we say, and one has an opportunity to do or say something which helps some one in a way quite unknown to oneself.

What am I in my home? If I am turned to God, am I at all trying to prepare Christ's way? Some day, if not just yet, I may have a home of my own, a husband, or wife and children, possibly servants. It is quite wonderful what I can do to prepare Christ's way. He will want to draw each soul to Him: I can help or hinder souls.

If those with whom I live see me growing gentler, kinder,

purer,—if they see that my church-going and my Communions do lead me on,—if they find only good books on my table,—if they find me happy and ready to help them to enjoy themselves, yet strict about bad places, bad books, bad plays, bit by bit those people will say, "There's something in religion."

And again, people who try to improve the state in which their brothers and sisters live and work are preparing the way for Christ. If I can do anything of this kind, I may be certain I am, it may be ever so little, "preparing the Way of the Lord." For instance, I work in a place where the laws made by Parliament which enforce proper ventilation, proper sanitary arrangements, fixed laws of work, are possibly broken. If I bravely do my duty, give information quietly to an inspector or a district visitor, or to a lady who is working in a girls' or boys' club, then I am doing real good work. If I try to have my house or my rooms clean, sweet, not overcrowded,—if I can learn about laws of health,—if I can have a sensible opinion on such matters as temperance and purity, I am working for Christ. And temperance work, and organizing labour to prevent overwork and sweating, are helping for the same end. We cannot bring people to Christ by giving them sufficient wages, and by helping them to be temperate, but we are moving hills of difficulty which lie in the way. Can I do anything? Probably. What are the rough places over which others are walking, which keep them so far from Him? Let me pray Him to make me, in my degree, His messenger. And I must pray to Him that we may be able to know His messengers. The woman who tries to raise enough spirit in her fellow-workers to form themselves into a union, the person who preaches temperance, the people who are working to try and stop overcrowding, all these may not seem God's messengers, but they are. Sometimes

they know it, sometimes they do not, but their work will not be forgotten by Him.

"Then cleansed be every breast from sin,
Make straight the way for God within,
Prepare we in our hearts a home
Where such a mighty Guest may come." (50.)

Thought II.

"Grant that the ministers and stewards of Thy mysteries."

Text.—"Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. iv. 1).

Now I am to think of the specially ordained messengers.

Minister,—simply one who serves.

That is what those who are called to be shepherds under the Shepherd of shepherds are to do: serve—wait on God's flock. The highest service is to serve others. Now, in thinking of the clergy as ministers, let me remember that they really are called to minister, to serve. If I am ill, or if some one dear to me is ill, I must not be afraid to ask help or advice if I need it.

"Stewards." A steward is one who looks after a large household, and gives out what is needful of food, medicine, and other goods.

God has a great household—His Church; and it has pleased Him to give out His stores of grace, and usually by means which can be seen and handled, and by appointed ministers, who are His stewards. The stewards may or may not be good stewards, but the gifts which God imparts through them to His household are good always. His mysteries—those wonderful gifts which are laid up in His Church: the grace of Baptism, where the seed of eternal life is planted in the soil; the grace of Confirmation, when

the Holy Spirit comes to strengthen the soul; the Holy Communion, that most precious of all gifts, the presence of Jesus Himself—these are the holy mysteries which God provides.

Again, when the sinner feels the real depth of sin, and longs to be sure the Lord does forgive, he can kneel and pour out his sins to God, and hear the absolving word: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power in His Church to absolve sinners who truly repent and believe in Him, of His great mercy forgive thee thine offences; and by His authority committed to me I absolve thee from all thy sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." [1]

These are some of God's mysteries given out to us by the hands of sinful men. Not indeed that one cannot come to God at all times. Yes, indeed, we, if we are His, have free access to our Father; we can pray always, at all times. But He is so tender, so good, He wants us to be quite sure we have received His grace, and so He has given us these pledges to assure us thereof. This is the work of a steward of God. Another side of his work is preaching—teaching of the things of God; bringing out things new and old from the treasury of Divine things. Do I at all know the blessing of being one of the "household of God"?

"O Thou Who makest souls to shine
With light from lighter worlds above,
And droppest glistening dew Divine
On all who seek a Saviour's love;

"Do Thou Thy benediction give
On all who teach, on all who learn,
That so Thy Church may holier live,
And every lamp more brightly burn.

[1] See the Office for the "Visitation of the Sick."

"Give those who teach pure hearts and wise,
Faith, hope, and love, all warmed by prayer;
Themselves first training for the skies,
They best will raise their people there.

"Give those who learn the willing ear,
The spirit meek, the guileless mind;
Such gifts will make the lowliest here
Far better than a kingdom find.

"O bless the shepherd; bless the sheep;
That guide and guided both be one,
One in the faithful watch they keep,
Until this hurrying life be done.

"If thus, good Lord, Thy grace be given,
In Thee to live, in Thee to die,
Before we upward pass to Heaven,
We taste our immortality." (353.)

Thought III.

"May likewise so prepare and make ready Thy way by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just."

Text.—"Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts ii. 38).

I have been thinking over the rich stores of grace provided in God's household, and given out to us by the hands of His ministers. Why does God do so much for us? That we may become His people; and therefore we pray that all the work of the ministry may make Christ's way ready for Him. Ready for Him? Ah, yes; for Whom do we want? Jesus! He is there ready to come to our hearts. Every Communion He comes to us to abide with us. Every

sermon should show us something about Him. Behind and in every act of ministry Jesus is, and it is for Him these acts prepare us.

There is conversion first. "Turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just." Disobedience is what St. John calls it: sin; "sin is lawlessness" (1 St. John iii. 4, 11). To be turned to God—converted—means that the converted man or woman means to put God first, to keep His commandments. This is the wisdom of the just. Do I understand this? At first sight one is inclined to think, "I'm young, I must have my liberty, and I want to do just as I like."

But if God in His mercy teaches me, if I answer His call, He will show me true freedom. He will show me how by degrees those who serve Him grow absolutely free from the chains which sin ties round those who serve sin. To know this, to get to understand what the Lord meant when He told the Jews that "every one that committeth sin is the servant of sin," to know that, as Christ said, "the truth shall make us free," is to have that heavenly wisdom which comes to the "just" (that word "just" means the servants of God) the "pure in heart."

Now I may have this wisdom if I will pray for help day by day to turn from sin. Every time I choose the hard path of right rather than the pleasant one of wrong God is giving me a little more wisdom. And the blessed gifts of grace given me in sacraments, especially in Holy Communion, all the teaching I get in sermons and instructions, are meant to help me.

Ought I not to pray very truly for the ministers of Christ, and for those who are to be made ministers of Christ, as at this time—this week on which I am entering—for this is one of the special times of prayer, one of the Ember weeks before an Ordination.

Do I feel I am disobedient? Do I know of commandments that I break? Gifts of grace from which I turn away?—Confirmation, or Communion, or instructions? Do I yield to sins of self-indulgence in food or drink? or do I break the commandment to love my neighbour by my sharp tongue or my readiness to take offence? These and many others are the acts of disobedience from which I must, if I will enter heaven, be turned.

Perhaps, please God, I am turning. Let me use His gifts more. Let me pray for those whom I know are disobedient. I may know some who are breaking God's laws. Let me try to pray more for them, bring them to hear the word of God preached by a faithful minister. Perhaps I may some time be in a parish where there is a special mission to the "disobedient." How much I can do for it by praying, by helping people to come and listen!

"O heavenly Word, eternal Light,
Begotten of the Father's might,
Who in these latter days art born
For succour to a world forlorn;

Our hearts enlighten from above,
And kindle with Thine own true love:
That we, who hear Thy call to-day,
May cast earth's vanities away.

"And when as Judge Thou drawest nigh,
The secrets of all hearts to try;
When sinners meet their awful doom,
And saints attain their heavenly home;

"O let us not, for evil past,
Be driven from Thy Face at last,
But with the blessed evermore
Behold Thee, love Thee, and adore.

"To God the Father, God the Son,
And God the Spirit, Three in one,
Praise, honour, might, and glory be
From age to age eternally." (46.)

Thought IV.

"That at Thy second coming to judge the world, we may be found an acceptable people in Thy sight, Who livest and reignest."

Text.—"He hath appointed a day, in which He will judge the world in righteousness, by the Man Whom He hath ordained" (Acts xvii. 31).

At our Lord's second coming there will be gathered together His redeemed, His people, His Church. Not one by one, all alone by ourselves, does He save us. One by one, indeed, we have His grace, but we are put into a family where we are to serve Him, where we each have our own work, our own place, and care and love for each other.

And this is the whole work of the ministry, of the Church, to convert people and to build them up. When a person comes to know Christ as his or her Saviour, that is only the very beginning. We are to give ourselves up to Him, so that He may make us acceptable to God. And, therefore, as I grow in my Christian life, I must grow in my care, in my longing for the whole Church, that more and more Christians should become such as God can accept.

First, in myself. Is there anything in me which is not given to Christ, on which God cannot look with pleasure?—some sin, some refusal to do something He asks? Is there anything He asks of me I will not do? And the whole Church—do I ever pray God that He will make the Church what He can accept? Do I ever think how dreadful it is that Christians should quarrel about religion? Do I ever

pray for unity? Do I ever pray against love of money among Christians? Do I ever pray that God will send many men to work specially for Him? Do I pray for missions to the heathen?

Christians must pray for themselves, for the whole Church. If I feel I don't care for these things, if it seems as if praying that Christians should be an acceptable people, and trying to yield myself to God to make *me* acceptable, lie quite outside of my life, let me just pray that He would awaken me, and make me *want* to care.

Christ will come—how and when we know not. But, as I have been taught to think during Advent, one day I shall stand before Him. How blessed it will be to stand as one bought by His precious blood, cleansed and made holy by the Spirit, joined to Him, one of that Church which is the Bride! And if not, "Yes, I did hear about holy things; but it was all so dull and so hard, and the pleasures of sin, and the hard work, and one thing and another drew me away." Yes, just that; we did not begin our everlasting life on earth. If we find nothing to interest us in Christ now, if we put the Lord quite out of our lives now, when the Day comes, will He be anything but our Judge? But, if very badly, very imperfectly, we have given up our wills, if we have done as He told us, how glad, how joyful, how utterly beyond our joy it will be to see Him as He is!

"The world is very evil,
The times are waxing late,
Be sober and keep vigil,
The Judge is at the gate—
The Judge Who comes in mercy,
The Judge Who comes with might,
Who comes to end the evil,
Who comes to crown the right.

" Arise, arise, good Christian,
Let right to wrong succeed ;
Let penitential sorrow
To heavenly gladness lead ;
To light that has no evening,
That knows nor moon, nor sun,
The light so new and golden,
The light that is but one.

" O home of fadeless splendour,
Of flowers that bear no thorn,
Where they shall dwell as children
Who here as exiles mourn ;
'Midst power that knows no limit,
Where wisdom has no bound,
The Beatific Vision
Shall glad the saints around.

" O happy, holy portion,
Refection for the blest,
True vision of true beauty,
True cure of the distrest !
Strive, man, to win that glory ;
Toil, man, to gain that light ;
Send hope before to grasp it,
Till hope be lost in sight.

" O sweet and blessed country,
The home of God's elect !
O sweet and blessed country,
That eager hearts expect !
Jesu, in mercy bring us
To that dear land of rest ;
Who art, with God the Father
And Spirit, ever blest !" (226.)

THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

The Collect.

O Lord, raise up, we pray Thee, Thy power and come among us, and with great might succour us; that whereas, through our sins and wickedness, we are sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before us, Thy bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us; through the satisfaction of Thy Son our Lord, to Whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be honour and glory, world without end. Amen.

Thought I.

"O Lord, raise up, we pray Thee, Thy power and come among us, and with great might succour us."

Text.—"Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might" (Eph. vi. 10).

This is a prayer which seems meant for Christians who, having turned to God, want to "renew their conversion," and also any one might pray it who wants to forsake sin.

Am I pleased with myself? Do I feel that I am just as religious as there is any occasion for me to be? I have much need to pray God to succour me, that is help me. But if it is not so, if I do feel either that I want to begin a new life, or that I want to make a fresh beginning, to be more in earnest, I can pray this prayer. Or do I feel cast down about any particular set of people—a club, a Sunday class, a home, a parish, a mission? Does it seem to me that there is very little life in me or in the people for whom, it may be, I pray, or work, or at any rate, love?

This is the prayer for me. God is never far away, and it pleases Him sometimes to show His people quite plainly

that He is raising up His power. Sometimes during a mission in a parish many souls are brought to Him. Sometimes He shows a Christian how strong He is against His enemies. I may feel sometimes, too, as if things were going badly for religion. I hear so many arguments against religion, or I see so much wickedness. Ah, then is the time for God to succour us. Sometimes, too, there come fiery temptations. Each Christian soul is tempted in a different way; but there do come times when it seems as if one *must* give in. "With great might succour us." There are more for me than there are against me. Do I remember the story of Elisha the prophet (2 Kings vi. 17), and how his servant's eyes were opened, to see horses and chariots of fire around Elisha? If my eyes were opened, the eyes of my soul, I should see that God and His holy angels were all round me. If I think that even to-day I have to meet temptations, let me pray this prayer.

If I know of some other, who is fighting against lust, or drink, or temper, or dishonesty, or is tried by doubts and fears, I can pray this prayer, and add "Our Father" for him, or for her.

"We pray Thee, Lord, arise,
And come in Thy great might;
Revive our drooping eyes,
Which languish for Thy sight." (217.)

Thought II.

"That whereas through our sins and wickedness we are sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before us."

Text.—"The sin which doth so easily beset us" (Heb. xii. 1).

"I will run the way of Thy commandments when Thou hast set my heart at liberty" (Ps. cxix. 32).

What keeps me back? what makes me really fail to enter into the joy of the Christian life? Sin, wickedness. There is no real difference in the meaning of these words, but for convenience I may take sin as meaning the tendency I have to do wrong, the evil nature which is yet unconquered, and wickedness may be taken to mean separate acts of wrong-doing. I am "let," which is just the same as hindered, the old English word—hindered in my Christian course. Have I started on it? and do I feel it is so hard to be a Christian? Am I inclined to blame my circumstances? I live among people who try my temper, or who set me a bad example by talking of evil things, or neglecting religion, or doing evil. Or I am very hard worked and have no time to look after my soul, or I have no quiet place to pray in. But these things are the circumstances of my life which God means me to use for His glory and my good. What does hinder me? Is it not my own sin? Perhaps I say, "It's just the way I'm made. I can't be cheerful." And so I brood and grumble, and hinder my growth in goodness. Or, "It's the way I'm made," I say, "to be worked on by other people; and if I'm with good people, I'm good; if with bad or careless people, I'm bad." And so on. Is it my own sin which keeps me back?—wickedness? separate acts? Don't I see how, by yielding to temptations and doing wrong, I get into wrong habits, and in time form wrong principles, and wrong principles will in time form a wrong character? I give way to sloth. By-and-by I've got so completely into the habit of not getting up in time to say my prayers, or go to early Communion, that I am getting little by little into doing without these. And I yield to temper. Very soon I get into the habit of flying out at my relations or friends and become bad tempered. And it is the same with yielding to all sorts of sinful acts. Taking what people call "nips"—stray glasses of strong drink,—doing little petty acts of dishonesty,

saying things which are not quite modest—all these will, do hinder me; nay, if persisted in, will prevent my running that race which is set before me.

I must not think I cannot serve God because of my circumstances. Circumstances are my opportunities. For instance, I have no really quiet place at home in which to pray, and I get into the habit of slipping into a church which is left open. My doing so makes another person bold to do the same. People try my temper: my struggles to keep it bear witness for Christ. And so on. "I am hindered in running." As God in His mercy sets us free from our old sins we do come to feel that our life in Christ becomes free from the chains; His service is "perfect freedom."

To be what He commands, to do what He asks, keeps one from being hindered. That, surely, is what the second text for to-day means, "my heart at liberty." God *will* give me that "glorious liberty of the sons of God" in time. Let me pray Him now to keep me, not to allow my sins to "hinder" me. What is it which will "hinder" me to-day?

> "Fight the good fight with all thy might;
> Christ is thy Strength, and Christ thy Right:
> Lay hold on life, and it shall be
> Thy joy and crown eternally." (540.)

Thought III.

"Thy bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us."

Text.—"His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved" (Eph. i. 6).

God is willing, anxious, if one may say so, to help one. He is ready to hear almost before one prays. He will give more help, more goodness, more than we prayed for.

I know in earthly things how very differently people give their money, their time, their kindness. Some people give gifts in such a way that those who receive them wish they had not to take them; others pour out money, and spend time and trouble, without a thought of themselves. These are like God; their giving is a shadow of His.

If only I will pray, His mercy will come to me. I shall grow to feel He does forgive me, His grace will help me. God's grace is very wonderful, and by-and-by I must think over it; but just now it is enough to take home to myself that His grace, His help, is enough for me if only I will use it. Things which seem impossible will in time grow easy. It seems so impossible now to make or keep a rule about reading the Bible. It seems too hard to take a decided step, and be Confirmed, or go to Communion. Or how can I beg some one's pardon whom I have offended, or confess a bit of deceit, or unsay a lie? These things seem impossible, yet can I go to my Christmas Communion with them undone? His grace is enough for me if I will use it.

"Deliver." We want God's grace to set us free. Is there anything which holds me fast? I cannot give up evil habits, some act of slothfulness, some "darling sin." Yet I want to give these things up. If I will only pray to God, He will deliver me.

"Speedily." Ah, yes, we do want Him to come quickly to our help. And it is wonderful how God in His mercy does sometimes set free captives of sin very quickly. Sometimes people do turn very speedily and completely from old sins, but not very often. God will help us speedily to begin to get the victory, but He generally wills that the deliverance from sin is slow. It does not matter if it is *sure*.

To be delivered from the chain of sin, to find God's mercy never failing, always far more than one could have dared to hope, to feel a little that His grace does help me in my daily

life—all these experiences may be mine, will be mine, if I will pray for them.

"Come, Almighty, to deliver,
Let us all Thy grace receive;
Suddenly return, and never,
Never more, Thy temples leave." (520.)

THOUGHT IV.

"Through the satisfaction of Thy Son our Lord."

Text.—"WHO DELIVERED US OUT OF THE POWER OF DARKNESS, AND TRANSLATED US INTO THE KINGDOM OF THE SON OF HIS LOVE; IN WHOM WE HAVE OUR REDEMPTION, THE FORGIVENESS OF OUR SINS" (Col. i. 13, 14).

This is my last Advent thought: what Jesus has done by coming to live and die for us.

God is *satisfied*. What do I mean by this?

Is it not something like this? God had meant man to grow more and more like Him, but sin had thwarted His purpose. And our Lord took on Himself our human nature, and, by His perfect life, ending in death, *satisfied* God. Yes, but what has this to do with *me*? This—that *if* I belong to Christ, if I share His life, God sees me only as a part of Christ. Do I belong to Christ? This joining on to Him begins in Baptism; but have I kept myself (or rather given myself to Christ to keep) close to Him?

Now I have been thinking of very awful truths. Death, judgment, heaven, hell. Do I feel any fear, any sins—that if I were sure I was going to die to-night, I should hardly know if I were saved? If so, is not all I have been thinking of meant to stir me up to repentance? Christmas is very near. Can I not now ask God to let me be His?—to forgive the past, and look on me only as in Christ?

And supposing I am so happy as to be trying day by day

to live the life of Christ, these words, "the satisfaction of Thy Son," ought to cheer me. As has been said over and over again, "God sees us not as we *are*, but as what we are becoming."[1] I feel so dissatisfied with myself, I do fall so often, my sins hinder me. Yes, but am I trying? Then it is all right. God looks on me, yes, on me, with love, and even my falls, if only I confess them with sorrow and shame, will in His mercy lead me farther. It is only by looking quite away from myself and trusting to Jesus that I can please God. *I* can do nothing. I am nothing. But if I have come to Him and thankfully received His gifts—His own flesh and blood —then He is in me and I in Him, and God is satisfied. "The satisfaction of Thy Son." If only I can take these words to myself, then my life of work, of sorrow, of joy, of health or sickness will be one of absolute peace and trust in time. As I said before, I must be patient. But what would the Lord have His forgiven children feel and show in their lives? Peace and joy.

Is there anything which is hindering my peace? Is there something which prevents my trusting in God? Do I feel sure that God cannot see me save as *in* Christ? It is a great thing to know this if it is so. I must at once get rid of whatever hinders me. God is waiting to help me if only I will pray.

"Look, Father, look on His Anointed Face,
And only look on us as found in Him;
Look not on our misusings of Thy grace,
Our prayer so languid and our faith so dim;
For lo! between our sins and their reward
We set the passion of Thy Son our Lord." (322.)

[1] *Creed of a Christian*, p. 56.

CHRISTMAS DAY

The Collect.

Almighty God, Who hast given us Thy only-begotten Son to take our nature upon Him, and as at this time to be born of a pure Virgin; grant that we, being regenerate and made Thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by Thy Holy Spirit; through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the same Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Thought I.

"Almighty God, Who hast given us Thy only-begotten Son to take our nature upon Him, and as at this time to be born of a pure Virgin."

Text.—"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (part of the Gospel).

Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, Who from all eternity is equal with the Father, has taken our human nature into the Divine nature. The Word of God, as He is called by St. John, has united Himself to a tender infant. He is born of a pure Virgin.

It is well for me to try and think what the Church teaches me to believe about one God. He is God and Man, one Christ, yet with a human soul, a human body, glorified and ascended into heaven, it is true, but still the same human

body. And He is born of a Virgin. He has made a new start for us men to-day. Mankind was utterly sick with sin ; nothing could cure men, no laws, no learning, no improvements, no growth in civilization ; only a new nature. And this is what Jesus has done. He has taken this human nature, and changed it, and glorified it. Now there is hope for us, for me.

Now it may be that as I in church hear the Creed of Athanasius sung or said, and hear the clear utterances about the right faith, how our Lord is perfect God and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting, and so on, it may be that I am tempted to think and to remember that I have heard people say, These sentences are hard, and have nothing to do with daily life. No greater mistake can be made, no sadder mistake in religion. It is often made by people who have some cleverness and a little learning.

Whom do I want to be my Refuge in the hour of death? (If I don't think about God, or my life and death, well, perhaps I can put Jesus Christ out of my mind, not otherwise.)

I want Jesus. Well, who *is* Jesus? I have to think. And that is just what happened to the very earliest disciples. They had to tell people about Jesus, and the outsiders said, Who is He? So, little by little, very surely, hating to express in man's words such great truths, they said, "Yes, He is God, and Man." Is He a real man? Yes. Is He really God? Yes—and so on, proving each statement from the holy Scriptures.

There is nothing really between holding the Catholic faith, and the belief that Jesus was only a Man. And people who hold that Jesus was only a Man are apt to find their belief in God grows fainter and fainter. And this faith in Jesus is what I need for life and for death. He can

save me now at once. Am I His? Then let me joyfully praise Him, and thank Him, and adore Him.

"O come, all ye faithful,
Joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold Him
Born, the King of angels;
O come let us adore Him,
O come let us adore Him,
O come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

"God of God,
Light of Light,
Lo! He abhors not the Virgin's womb;
Very God,
Begotten, not created;
O come let us adore Him,
O come let us adore Him,
O come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

"Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation,
Sing all ye citizens of heaven above:
'Glory to God
In the highest';
O come let us adore Him,
O come let us adore Him,
O come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

"Yea, Lord, we greet Thee,
Born this happy morning;
Jesu, to Thee be glory given;
Word of the Father,
Now in flesh appearing;
O come let us adore Him,
O come let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord." (59.)

ST. STEPHEN'S DAY

The Collect.

Grant, O Lord, that in all our sufferings here upon earth for the testimony of Thy truth, we may steadfastly look up to heaven, and by faith behold the glory that shall be revealed; and being filled with the Holy Ghost, may learn to love and bless our persecutors by the example of Thy first martyr St. Stephen, who prayed for his murderers to Thee, O blessed Jesus, who standest at the right hand of God to succour all those that suffer for Thee, our only Mediator and Advocate. Amen.

Text.—"And they stoned Stephen, calling upon the Lord, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep" (Acts vii. 59, 60).

We are brought from our Christmas joy to the thought of what our Lord's becoming Man brought on Him and all His followers in their degree—that is, *all* our sufferings which witnessing for Christ may bring upon us for "the testimony of Thy truth." To witness for Jesus is what every Christian has to do daily. Sometimes we must suffer.

People may simply make our lives unpleasant by mocking, by small persecutions. Or we may have to suffer

money loss because we cannot cheat, or wink at "tricks of the trade." Or we may have to bear anger, loss of affection. And every now and then, as in China in the summer of 1900, we hear of Christians who must lay down their lives for Christ. And as we think of them let us give thanks to God, Who gave His servants grace to witness for Him unto the death.

Now I, who read this, may probably never be called on to die for Christ, but I have to live for Him, and make my whole life witness for Him. And I must be ready to suffer. But there is another thought in this Collect. We must suffer, but how? Meekly. When people mock us, insult us, put hindrances in our way, pass us over, or any worse thing, what can we do?

Think of St. Stephen. He knelt down. Surely he had heard of the Lord's dying words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." His own prayer echoes these words.

And I know what vision gladdened his eyes.

It may be that I have many small daily trials to bear from others, and though they are small they try me much. Do I take them to our Lord? If there is any one who is really and truly unkind to me because of my religion, how do I think of that person? Does his or her name come into my prayers? Do I ever think that people who dislike or vex others on account of religion are always ignorant about true religion. And so I can truly pray that this sin may not be laid to their charge.

Here are some words from an old German writer (let me pray God to help me, whenever I suffer through others, to teach me to feel their truth):

"Even when ill-treated by others, he (the Christian) bears no malice, for he knows it is God who permits man to injure him for his good, so he is not angry with the instru-

ment, but rather tries to see God's hand in the affliction, who uses man as his tool."

Lastly, the Collect prays that we may look up to heaven, and by faith behold the glory that shall be revealed.

That is the only way in which I can hope to come to this mind of Christ. I must think of our Lord, pray Him to raise me up more and more to heavenly places, that even on earth I may be with Him; and then, by degrees, I shall come to see how little these things matter. Christ is alive—is in heaven and ever ready to help me. Only let me look up to Him, and even here He will grant me to feel His help, His presence, His strength, for He is our Elder Brother, and when His members suffer He suffers in them.

"Yesterday, with exultation,
Joined the world in celebration
Of her promised Saviour's birth;
Yesterday the Angel-nation
Poured the strains of jubilation
O'er the Monarch born on earth:

"But to-day, o'er death victorious,
By his faith and actions glorious,
By his miracles renowned,
See the Deacon triumph gaining,
'Midst the faithless faith sustaining,
First of holy Martyrs found." (64.)

ST. JOHN'S DAY

The Collect.

Merciful Lord, we beseech Thee to cast Thy bright beams of light upon Thy Church, that it being enlightened by the doctrine of Thy blessed Apostle and Evangelist St. John may so walk in the light of Thy truth, that it may at length attain to the light of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Text.—"That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life (and the Life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the Life, the eternal Life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us); that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us: yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ: and these things we write, that our joy may be fulfilled.

And this is the message which we have heard from Him, and announce unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

BUT IF WE WALK IN THE LIGHT, AS HE IS IN THE LIGHT, WE HAVE FELLOWSHIP ONE WITH ANOTHER, AND THE BLOOD OF JESUS HIS SON CLEANSETH US FROM ALL SIN. IF WE SAY THAT WE HAVE NO SIN WE DECEIVE OURSELVES, AND THE TRUTH IS NOT IN US. IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS, HE IS FAITHFUL AND RIGHTEOUS TO FORGIVE US OUR SINS, AND TO CLEANSE US FROM ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS. IF WE SAY THAT WE HAVE NOT SINNED, WE MAKE HIM A LIAR, AND HIS WORD IS NOT IN US" (1 St. John i., Revised Version).

To-day the Church teaches us to thank God for St. John, for his teaching, for his doctrine. The Church of God is enlightened by St. John Do I feel at all thankful for this teaching? Do I realize what a loss it would be if the Church possessed no Gospel, no Epistles of St. John, no Revelation of St. John? St. John lifts us up to the things of God. In his Gospel these great ideas seem to be always prominent: light, love, witness, glory. He it is who teaches us the inner meaning of the Sacraments, his whole Gospel is full of sacramental teaching. He it is who gives us the most precious words, perhaps, of all the words of our Lord: the promise of the many mansions of peace, of our Lord's ever-abiding presence. St. John does not argue, he gives us great ideas. He teaches us more than any one else of the inner mind of the Lord,—of the oneness, the fellowship there must be between each soul and its Lord.

Do I at all enter into the wonder and beauty of St. John's teaching? St. John leads us, each one of us, to *know* Christ. And to most of God's saints he is the writer they could least spare. On St. John they feed their souls, for in his Gospel they must find Him whom their souls desire to love.

And the more the whole Church of God is taught by St. John, the more will the Church be filled with the Spirit of the Lord who loved St. John.

I must try to read that Gospel, that first Epistle, over and over again. St. John will teach me all about the fellowship I must have with Jesus. In his Gospel I shall learn the wonders, the inexpressible blessedness, of the Holy Communion, the reality of the baptismal blessing, the promise of absolution from sin. I shall learn to see the deep meaning of each of the miracles recorded by St. John. I shall learn the mission of the blessed Comforter.

And that lovely Epistle. It teaches us the true life, the life of love ; it teaches us what sin really is, what will help us to overcome the world.

It is impossible for one who feeds His soul on these most holy books not to be lifted up to a holy life, to the beginning of the life of fellowship with God.

" Word Supreme, before creation,
Born of God eternally,
Who didst will for our salvation
To be born on earth, and die ;
Well Thy saints have kept their station,
Watching till Thine hour drew nigh.

" Now 'tis come, and faith espies Thee,
Like an eaglet in the morn ;
One in steadfast worship eyes Thee,
Thy beloved, Thy latest born :
In Thy glory he descries Thee
Reigning from the tree of scorn.

" He upon Thy bosom lying
Thy true tokens learned by heart ;
And Thy dearest pledge in dying,
Lord, Thou didst to him impart :

Show'dst him how, all grace supplying,
Blood and water from Thee start.

"He first, hoping and believing,
Did beside the grave adore;
Latest he, the warfare leaving,
Landed on the eternal shore;
And his witness we receiving
Own Thee Lord for evermore.

"Much he asked in loving wonder,
On Thy Bosom leaning, Lord;
In that secret place of thunder
Answer kind didst Thou accord,
Wisdom for Thy Church to ponder
Till the day of dread award.

"Lo! Heaven's doors lift up, revealing
How Thy judgments earthward move;
Scrolls unfolded, trumpets pealing,
Wine cups from the wrath above;
Yet o'er all a soft voice stealing—
'Little children, trust and love!'

"Thee, the Almighty King Eternal,
Father of the Eternal Word,
Thee, the Father's Word Supernal,
Thee, of Both, the Breath adored,
Heaven and earth and realms infernal
Own one glorious God and Lord." (67.)

INNOCENTS' DAY

The Collect.

O Almighty God, Who out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast ordained strength, and madest infants to glorify Thee by their deaths; mortify and kill all vices in us, and so strengthen us by Thy grace, that by the innocency of our lives, and constancy of our faith even unto death, we may glorify Thy holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Text.—"These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were purchased from among men, to be the firstfruits unto God and unto the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no lie: they are without blemish" (Rev. xiv. 4, 5).

The teaching of to-day's Collect is this: the great value in God's sight of innocency. These little children have indeed taught us how to offer our suffering to God, but that is the special lesson of the Gospel. Let me try and enter into the prayer of the Collect. It begins by praising God for these children; then we pray Him to do to death (which is the meaning of mortify) all vices, so that we may glorify Him by the innocency of our lives.

Innocence. This is a most beautiful grace. Innocence is the outward expression of purity of heart. It means not ignorance of evil, but it does mean a soul washed in Jesus' blood, which shrinks from thinking about or touching

wickedness. An innocent person will not shrink from helping a very sinful man or woman if need be ; a pure, innocent soul will cause wicked people to feel ashamed of their own sin, their own vice.

Sometimes one sees people who have never lost the purity and innocence given them in holy Baptism. They have the most wonderful power to help others. If God in His mercy has kept me from contact with sin, from any real knowledge of the wickedness of the world, it is worth, oh! so much pains to guard this purity of heart. To turn away from evil books, evil talk, bad plays, to pray God for help when I am tempted to think of evil, to fill my mind with holy thoughts, and, chief of all, to live in His presence—all these will keep me in that fresh innocence; and as years go on I shall find that God does use me to help others. Only there must be the daily doing to death of all sins. But supposing I cannot feel I am one of those happy ones who have kept their baptismal purity. Then day by day I must pray God to give me deep, true sorrow for, and power to destroy, the sins which stain my soul. For this prayer is the prayer of a converted soul—Christians who want to be all that God asks them to be. Do I feel that it is impossible for me to be innocent, to forget the sins which darken my mind? But I can be penitent. I can daily mortify my sins. If it is needful, I can cut off whatever is most precious or most delightful ; it may be some amusement or some pleasure which leads me into sin. Constantly Christ Himself will apply the cleansing of His precious blood to my soul, and little by little He will clothe my soul, stained with all sorts of sins, in His robe of righteousness. The penitent, the innocent, are alike Christ's ; alike they can glorify Him, and be constant even unto death.

Probably this constancy unto death in my case will mean

persevering all the long days of life, growing in purity, in penitence, in love. But if it meant suffering even unto death for Christ, He would make that possible for me to bear.

Am I growing in purity? am I in any sense doing to death my sins? What about love of money, dress, food, drink, indulgences and temptations to sins of the flesh? These are the sins which kill God's life in the soul, these are the sins which need to be killed.

"Lord, help us every hour
Thy cleansing grace to claim;
In life to glorify Thy power,
In death to praise Thy name." (69.)

THE CHRISTMAS DAY COLLECT

Thoughts for December 29th, 30th, 31st

We have had three Saints' Days since Christmas Day, and we now return to Thoughts on the Collect for Christmas Day, which is said every day until the New Year.

Thought for December 29th.

"Grant that we being regenerate."

Text.—"Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (St. John iii. 5).

We began this Collect by praising God for sending His Son to become Man—incarnate, took flesh—and we go on to say that, as we are regenerate; that is what our Lord says in the text I have just read, "born again."

The New Birth. When was I born again? There is simply only one answer. "In my Baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." In Baptism a new life is given to the soul, the seed of Eternal Life is planted.

That life may grow by degrees, and receive strength, nourishment, medicine, until it is perfected beyond the grave. "God in fact, at every turn of our lives, provides us with a Sacramental Service, to give us what we need." [1]

[1] *The Christian's Manual*. This little book contains the simplest.

But that life given in Baptism may be allowed almost to die, just as the life of our bodies would languish, and in time die, if the body received no food, no medicine in sickness, and so on. And just as bodily life may be revived, just as health may be restored to the sick and strength may be granted to the weak, so it may be with a soul which is sick with sin. But, oh, how much better to cherish the life! If I am still young, trained in holy habits of prayer and Bible reading and church going, and innocent of evil, let me pray God to give me "fresh springs," real heart yielding to Him; so shall I go on from strength to strength. That is what we pray for every baptized child, and that prayer is heard—not seldom.

But if the life is dead, and there is no growth, what is to be done? What is needed? Utter, entire conversion. The prodigal must return, the lost piece of silver be found.

But in each case it is the wanderer who returns. Do I think enough of my Baptism? Do I realize Baptism has placed me in God's kingdom? Do I believe He will help me to live as one who is bought by Christ, washed in the Sacrament of the New Birth, should live? I am new born. Let me claim my rights.

"O Christ, the heavens' Eternal King,
Creator, unto Thee we sing,
With God the Father ever One,
Co-equal, co-eternal Son.

"Thy Hand, when first the world began,
Made in Thine own pure Image man,
And linked to fleshly form of earth
A living soul of heavenly birth.

fullest, most Scriptural teaching on the Sacramental System, and on worship and prayer, that the present writer has ever found in any manual of devotion.

"And when the envious, crafty foe
Had marred Thy noblest work below,
Thou didst our ruined state repair
By deigning flesh Thyself to wear.

"Once of a Virgin born to save,
And now new born from death's dark grave,
O Christ, Thou bidst us rise with Thee
From death to immortality.

"Eternal Shepherd, Thou art wont
To cleanse Thy sheep within the font,
That mystic bath, that grave of sin,
Where ransomed souls new life begin." (129.)

Thought for December 30th.

"And made Thy children by adoption and grace."

Text.—"Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom. viii. 15).

I have seen in the Thought for yesterday that God has made me His child. In my Baptism I got "a new nature, a new Father, a new name."[1] Was this my right by nature? Was I born into this? No; in one sense God *is* the great Father of all, but He is the Father of Christians in a very new, special way. Why?

Because Christians are taken up into Christ, and share Christ's sonship. That is what is meant by adoption. "Being by nature born in sin," we are made in our Baptism the children of God, and have a right to say, "Our Father." That prayer only belongs to the baptized by right.

And grace—the Divine life of the soul. God's grace

[1] F. Longridge's *Lessons on the Catechism.*

comes to us through Jesus Christ. It is "of His fulness we receive." We are empty, and we are filled with His life. He takes our nature—that is called His "Incarnation"; but He also gives us His life. How? Chiefly through Sacraments. Sacraments have been called the "Extension of the Incarnation," (1) because they are the means by which the Divine grace which dwells only in Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, is brought to us; (2) because in the Sacraments Divine grace is brought to us (as in the Incarnation the Son of God came to us) "under earthly form." [1]

Baptism is the first of the Sacraments, and gives to the soul the new birth. God puts us into such a state that if the life is nourished, the baptized person can grow in holiness up to a full-grown Christian.

"O Christ, Redeemer of our race,
Thou Brightness of the Father's Face,
Of Him, and with Him ever one,
Ere times and seasons had begun;

"Thou that art very Light of light,
Unfailing Hope in sin's dark night;
Hear Thou the prayers Thy people pray
The wide world o'er this blessed day.

"Remember, Lord of life and grace,
How once, to save a ruined race,
Thou didst our very flesh assume
In Mary's undefilèd womb.

"To-day, as year by year, its light
Sheds o'er the world a radiance bright,
One precious truth is echoed on—
'Tis Thou hast saved us, Thou alone.'

[1] *The Christian's Manual.*

"Thou from the Father's Throne didst come,
To call His banished children home;
And heaven and earth and sea and shore
His love Who sent Thee here adore.

"And gladsome too are we to-day,
Whose guilt Thy Blood hath washed away;
Redeem'd, the new-made song we sing;
It is the birthday of our King.

"O Lord, the Virgin-born, to Thee
Eternal praise and glory be,
Whom with the Father we adore
And Holy Ghost for evermore." (57.)

THOUGHT FOR DECEMBER 31ST.

"May daily be renewed by Thy Holy Spirit."

Text.—"GROW IN THE GRACE AND KNOWLEDGE OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST" (2 St. Pet. iii. 18).

This is the climax of the Collect. *Because* God has made me His child, and washed me, and given me grace, I pray that I may live and grow, that I may, bit by bit, "do to death" my old sinful nature, and receive fresh renewals. For our life in Christ is—*to grow.*

I must never, never think I can stand still in my Christian life. Sometimes, after a crisis, a great event, such as Confirmation, or a first Communion, or marriage, one is tempted to grow slack, careless. If this temptation ever comes to me, let me think of the Christmas Day Collect, and of the Bishop's prayer in Confirmation, "daily increase in Thy Holy Spirit." Year by year a Christian should renew, by the help of the Holy Ghost, his conversion. Year by year, nay, week by week, he should pray for the pre-

sence of the Holy Ghost to give him fresh grace. It is the Holy Spirit who makes all the Sacraments the channels of God's grace.

Can I pray this prayer? Is there in my life a daily fight against sin? Let me read the prayers said for those to be baptized :—

> "O merciful God, grant that the old Adam in these persons may be so buried, that the new man may be raised up in them. Amen.
>
> "Grant that all carnal affections may die in them, and that all things belonging to the Spirit may live and grow in them. Amen.
>
> "Grant that they may have power and strength to have victory, and to triumph, against the devil, the world, and the flesh. Amen.
>
> "Grant that they, being here dedicated to Thee by our office and ministry, may also be endued with heavenly virtues, and everlastingly rewarded, through Thy mercy, O blessed Lord God, Who dost live, and govern all things, world without end. Amen."

This is what my life should be. Perhaps it would help me to say one of these prayers for myself every day in turn, using "I" and "me" instead of "these persons." Now, how shall I make this practical? Am I growing in purity? Do I hate sin more?—hate wicked plays, books, jests more? Am I kinder, gentler, more willing to put myself out for people? Am I more particular about honesty, truth? Do I guard my tongue more than I did? These are the every-day details of life, yet it is through these details that my character is to be formed, that I am to grow. And it is by holding the true faith about Christ, knowing Him as my Saviour, knowing Him to be what the Creed says He is, that I can grow, can be renewed, can receive His Divine life. I may be poor, unlearned, and I certainly am sinful; but I can

receive the life of Jesus more and more if I will. That is the lesson of Christmas, the hope for the New Year, "Christ in you the hope of glory."

"O Holy Ghost, Thy people bless
Who long to feel Thy might,
And fain would grow in holiness
As children of the light.

"To Thee we bring, Who art the Lord,
Ourselves to be Thy throne;
Let every thought, and deed, and word
Thy pure dominion own.

"Life-giving Spirit, o'er us move,
As on the formless deep;
Give life and order, light and love,
Where now is death or sleep.

"Great Gift of our ascended King,
His saving truth reveal;
Our tongues inspire His praise to sing,
Our hearts His love to feel.

"True Wind of Heaven, from south or north,
For joy or chastening, blow;
The garden spices shall spring forth
If Thou wilt bid them flow.

"O Holy Ghost, of sevenfold might,
All graces come from Thee;
Grant us to know and serve aright
One God in Persons Three." (211.)

CIRCUMCISION

The Collect.

Almighty God, Who madest Thy blessed Son to be circumcised, and obedient to the law for man; grant us the true circumcision of the Spirit; that our hearts, and all our members, being mortified from all worldly and carnal lusts, we may in all things obey Thy blessed will; through the same Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"Almighty God, Who madest Thy blessed Son to be circumcised, and obedient to the law for man."

Text.—"As children of obedience, not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in the time of your ignorance" (1 St. Pet. i. 14).

Our blessed Lord began His life by yielding Himself to pain, simply for the sake of obedience.

The Jewish law commanded this to be, and the Lord, Who said He had come not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it, obeyed this and every other command.

For to-day let me think of this duty of obedience.

Obeying—it is often a great help. Do I take this home to myself? How often in religious matters what a help it is simply to know what the Church has told her children to do, and to do it! To have a simple rule to obey often gives one a sort of backbone to one's life.

The Church tells her children to come to Communion, to

repent of sins (which means giving up sin), to believe what is taught them in the Creed, to be in charity with every one.

Then there are rules about alms, about fasting, which we are bound to keep. There are laws about marriage.

Now it is a great thing to take these things on trust at first. One is not always inclined to pray, to ask oneself questions about sin, to forgive people who have vexed one. One does not always *see* why it is right to be so particular about the marriage law. One does not always *see* why it is right to deny oneself. And to take them all on trust at first, and by degrees to grow to see how right, how reasonable, how entirely in agreement with the teaching of Holy Scripture, with the needs of human nature, with the eternal laws of right, these teachings are, is the reasonable course.

Obedience is not always a very favourite virtue with the young ; but if I will only remember the Lord's example, I shall see that if He obeyed I can. Is there anything I ought to do of which I don't see the use ?

Shall I not begin, on this New Year's Day, to practise obedience ? It will lead me most surely to that perfect freedom which God's children enjoy.

> " For love of us His woes begin ;
> The Sinless suffers for our sin ;
> The Law's great Maker, for our aid,
> Obedient to the Law is made." (71.)

Thought II.

" Grant us the true circumcision of the Spirit ; that our hearts, and all our members, being mortified from all worldly and carnal lusts."

Text.—" Beloved, I beseech you as sojourners and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts" (1 St. Pet. ii. 11).

Now we are led to think of the meaning of what St. Paul calls the inner circumcision of the heart. That is, the cutting off all that is wrong, cutting off the right hand, the most precious sin. That is the stern side of Christian life, that which the circumcision of the Jews prefigured.

And I must not hide from myself that to be a Christian means that I must be stern—with myself. I did promise once to renounce—give up—the world, the flesh, the devil. Does that promise mean anything to me?

"Worldly lusts." The world is everywhere, it does not mean always the rich or the people in high places. But it does mean people who set themselves against God, or who put God out of sight, who do not refer to Him when they make their plans. And the worldly lusts are wishes which tempt me to put God second in my life, or out of sight. The Sunday pleasures which make Church impossible; the love of amusements which spoil my Sundays, which prevent my having time for prayer; the companions who lead me away or whose jeers make me afraid to "confess Christ"; the dishonest practices which I will not forsake—these are worldly lusts.

"And carnal lusts." Carnal means fleshly, belonging to our bodies. A Christian must have his or her body in subjection—must rule the body.

The indulgence in any fleshly sin, to drink too much, to sleep too much, those desires of which we cannot speak—am I doing these wishes to death? As more and more I rule my body, as I struggle against these fleshly lusts, so shall I be ready to obey God. This struggle is hard, but it is so very much worth while.

"Take up thy cross, the Saviour said,
If thou wouldst My disciple be;
Deny thyself, the world forsake,
And humbly follow after Me." (263.)

Thought III.

"We may in all things obey Thy blessed will."

Text.—"Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth" (St. Luke xi. 2).

It is only by this life of doing to death one's sinful wishes and acts that one can obey God's will. But by degrees God in His love will draw us upwards, and one's aim will be not "I must not do this or that," but "What is God's will?"

That is the really blessed life, and I may indeed look forward to the time when to do God's will will be my joy. God leads His children by His Holy Spirit, and in time they are really free. Rules no longer are any torment, because a little bit of self-denial for Christ's sake is joy. One's prayers, one's Bible, one's Communions, become as needful as daily food and air and light. And the rules are just in the background, so that in one's dull hours, which come to every Christian when one is not inclined to pray, one feels one must out of obedience. And so it is with the great laws of right and wrong. It will no longer be a pleasure to sin. And one grows to see the joy, the reasonableness, of right doing.

Again, to obey God's will in all things makes a Christian absolutely clear-sighted. In time the Holy Spirit gives him a right judgment.

Sometimes duties seem to clash, and a new duty seems to put aside an old one. There is a wonderful poem,[1] in which is described the trials which a very young girl had to bear in her married life from her husband. She bore everything with perfect patience and obedience, until she found she must leave him in order to save her child. Then, aided by a faithful friend, she fled. It was said of her:

[1] *The Ring and the Book*: "The Pope, 1056–59.

" This I praise most in thee, where all I praise,
That having been obedient to the end . . .
Thou, patient thus, couldst rise from law to law,
The old to the new, promoted at one cry
O' the trump of God to the new service."

Now, there does sometimes come a time in Christian lives when new cares, new duties, seem to come into their lives. It is only those who have been faithful to the first simple duties who can fearlessly dare to put them aside.

A call may come, which makes us put aside one's parents' wishes. Only those who have been obedient, dutiful children can fearlessly obey it.

And so it is always in such difficult questions.

Those who have led obedient lives, who have tried to obey the Church's rules, who have followed God's leading, can sometimes see that God means them—for a particular reason—to disregard some rule (not, of course, a commandment).

A very simple case is that of Sunday church-going. When one has never set it aside for one's own pleasure, one can fearlessly do so when one sees a call to help some one else ; and so on, in more difficult cases than this. In all things this is to be my aim. God's will, not mine.

" Take what He gives
And praise Him still,
Through good and ill,
Who ever lives." (546.)

ST. DEINIOL'S HAWARDEN LIBRARY

THE EPIPHANY, OR THE MANIFESTATION OF CHRIST TO THE GENTILES

The Collect.

O God, Who by the leading of a star didst manifest Thy only-begotten Son to the Gentiles; mercifully grant, that we, which know Thee now by faith, may after this life have the fruition of Thy glorious Godhead; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"O God, Who by the leading of a star didst manifest Thy only-begotten Son to the Gentiles."

Text.—"And the Gentiles shall come to Thy light" (Isa. lx. 3).

At first sight I may not quite understand why the Epiphany, a word which means "showing forth," should be so great a festival. But if I will read the Epistle for to-day, I shall see that it was a wonderful revelation which God made through these wise men. They came from far, led on by the star; they returned; they were the firstfruits of the great world of Gentiles—of all the nations outside God's chosen people.

God began by choosing one nation, which was to be taught and prepared for Jesus Christ. But that did not

mean that Christ was to come only to the Jews. The chosen people found it very hard to believe that other races were to be as favoured as themselves, that in God's Church there were no favourites.

And the wise men are the firstfruits of the harvest which is slowly being gathered in.

I may have to learn the same lesson which the first Christians had to grasp: that God wants all races. English people are very apt to think themselves specially favoured and to despise other nations.

Do I care for missions? Do I pray that the gifts and graces which belong to other races may be made holy for God? That is the reason for all mission work. It is for the glory of God that all races should be brought into His Church, and bring in some new gift, so that the Body of Christ may be complete.

If I care at all for Jesus, I must care for missions. I must long to bring in fresh recruits to the army of the Lord.

One more thought. It was by the leading of a star the wise men were led.

God will teach honest, true hearts to see Him in this outside world—now, in things we see every day. A Christian learns to see God in the beauty of the world. I may live in a large town, and have no beautiful sea or mountains; but there are sunsets, and starlit skies, and trees and flowers. God will let this lovely world be a true Sacrament of His love if I will pray to Him for this grace.

> "Did not the Gentile Church find grace,
> Our mother dear, this favoured day?
> With gold and myrrh she sought Thy face,
> Nor didst Thou turn Thy face away."[1]

[1] *Christian Year*, from this day's poem.

Thought II.

"Mercifully grant, that we, which know Thee now by faith."

Text.—"And we know that the Son of God is come" (1 St. John v. 20).

"To know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge" (Eph. iii. 19).

"We know." St. John is so fond of using the word KNOW. Christians, as one has been taught, grow to know more and more, because the Holy Spirit pours upon them the gift of a growing faith.

Do I know what is meant by faith? Surely faith is the power to live in, and trust, and guide one's life, by "what as yet one does not see with the bodily eyes." I must never think for a minute that faith is opposed to, contrary to, reason. God is the Giver of reason, of all knowledge; and if man's brain could understand everything about God and His ways, man would be God. People so often forget this. They are puzzled; they hear other people who have picked up scraps of knowledge talking about religion being contrary to reason, and they begin, perhaps, to doubt the truths of religion. If I come across this, I must not be frightened. There is a great deal in the world which we cannot understand, but there is nothing in the truths of the Creed, in the religion of our living Lord, which is contrary to reason.

In every-day common life ordinary people take many things for granted for a long time, such as the earth moving round the sun, the circulation of the blood. They believe these things because people who have studied tell them. Then, possibly, they find out how *reasonable* these every-day facts are.

So it is, in a way, with the truths of our holy religion.

We take them on the authority of the Church, of the whole family of God. But God brings them home to each Christian heart by the Holy Spirit, and the loving, obedient Christian comes to *know* God, and to know Him more and more.

"O help us, through the prayer of faith,
More firmly to believe;
For still the more the servant hath
The more shall he receive." (279.)

Thought III.

"May after this life have the fruition of Thy glorious Godhead."

Text.—"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (St. Matt. v. 8).

"After this life" faith will no longer be needed because we shall see God.

"The fruition." That is, I suppose, the completeness of all we have striven for. All this earthly life has been given for one purpose—to build up the character God wished to form in each one of us; to make us stones of His temple, members of Christ's Body, living branches of the One Vine. It is very good for me sometimes to stop and ask myself, "Why am I here at all? what is my life given me for?" And if I will only believe it, the answer is, "God wants *me*; no one else can do just the bit of work He wants from me; no one else can fill the place in His temple He wants me to fill here on earth as long as He wills, or after in Paradise. And it is for this that I may enjoy God—"glorify God and enjoy Him for ever," as a Catechism, which some Christians learn, teaches us. God makes us for joy. Everything He sends me in this life is to make me ready to enjoy Him. Does this seem so far out of my life? But if I begin

now to try to put God first, to pray to Him regularly *whether I am inclined to or not*, to think of Him during the long day, to join in His worship on His holy days, to tell Him about my troubles, fears, joys, little by little I am putting myself into His hands to train my soul for that vision of God which, perhaps, now I can hardly think about. Yet it is that for which every saint has longed, and which will be granted to every child of God who perseveres.

"Weak is the effort of my heart,
And cold my warmest thought;
But when I see Thee as Thou art,
I'll praise Thee as I ought." (176.)

THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

The Collect.

O Lord, we beseech thee mercifully to receive the prayers of Thy people which call upon Thee; and grant that they may both perceive and know what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"O Lord, we beseech thee mercifully to receive the prayers of thy people which call upon thee."

Texts.—"Lord, I call upon Thee. . . . Let my prayer be set forth in Thy sight as the incense" (Ps. cxli. 1, 2).

God our Father has told us to pray to Him. Our Lord Jesus taught His disciples how to pray.

Am I, who read this, one of God's servants who "call upon Him?"—that is, who pray earnestly.

Do I pray? What sort of prayers?

The way in which any Christian can try his prayers is to test them by the Lord's Prayer.

First, in that prayer, is praise, worship—"Our Father, which art in heaven." Then there are three prayers for the

things which belong to God—that He may be glorified; then a short word for ourselves, for the whole family of God, that God would give the things we need; and then a prayer for forgiveness, and for protection and safety.[1]

So I, if I am a Christian, must try and learn to pray more and more the prayers Christ wants me to pray.

Do I put any praise into my prayers? Do I pray that God may be glorified? Do I care enough for Him to want to pray for His kingdom—the Church? Do I pray that He will give me what He sees I need, not the things I think I want? Do I always pray for forgiveness, and that He will be with me?

I need not spend much *time* in prayer to do all this, but I should try to pray in this way.

I can bring all my troubles to God. I can call upon Him, but I must pray that He will do His will, and make me love His will.

That is why it is the work of a lifetime to learn to pray; it takes a long time for us to learn to *love* God's will. So I must pray God to teach me to pray, and whatever happens I must never, never cease to pray.

"Lord, teach us how to pray aright
With reverence and with fear;
Though dust and ashes in Thy sight,
We may, we must draw near.

"We perish if we cease from prayer;
O grant us power to pray;
And, when to meet Thee we prepare,
Lord, meet us by the way." (247.)

[1] Cf. *Christian Prayer and the Lord's Prayer*, by Canon Gore.

Thought II.

"And grant that they may both perceive and know what things they ought to do."

Text.—"O send out Thy light and Thy truth, that they may lead me" (Ps. xliii. 3).

One of the great gifts which God gives to those who are really trying to serve Him is clearness of sight—that is, the eyes of the mind are not blinded.

For people do shut up their mental eyes in many ways, and one hears people say, "I can't *see* things as you do." "I don't *see* why one need be confirmed, why one should go to early celebration of Holy Communion, why one need be so strict, why one should keep Lent, why one should bother about missions." Yet all these things are quite clear and obvious to people whose mental eyes are clear.

How can I be sure that the eyes of my mind are not blinded? Only by prayer and by Sacraments. If I am doubtful about anything, it is wonderful what light will come into my mind if only I will pray, and especially if I will pray about it at Holy Communion.

For, as life goes on, it is not easy to know what is right to do. Sometimes duties seem to clash. Sometimes one is afraid of seeming to set oneself up as being better than other people if one takes a definite stand for right against wrong.

And sometimes a Christian is really puzzled as to how he or she should act towards another person. Prayer to God for the light of His Holy Spirit will in time bring light. And again, there come to Christians calls to higher duties. Some new way of serving God is shown one. It may be a small piece of Church work, it may be a call to leave home, it may be to serve God in the mission field. If such things come in my way, do not let me be sure they have nothing to

do with me. Let me pray this prayer very, very often before I decide one way or the other :

> "Come to our poor nature's night
> With Thy blessed inward light,
> Holy Ghost the Infinite,
> Comforter Divine." (524.)

Thought III.

"And also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same."

Text.—"That ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (from the Epistle for this week).

It is a great blessing when God sheds light over one's life so that one sees one's duties. Yet how hard one finds it is to carry out—to do God's will !

In a general way, perhaps, I who read this may be, through God's mercy, really trying to please Him ; and in His love He gives me a clearer manifestation of what He wants me to *do*. Sometimes a Christian comes to see he or she has been neglecting some duty. It may be there is some one I ought to help by doing a bit of work for him. I may have neglected to teach prayers to children over whom I am set. Or is there some one to whom I do not speak, some one I dislike? Is this to be my Epiphany offering, to bring the gold of love, and the myrrh of penitence, and make up this quarrel or do this newly perceived duty? Ah, but when God flashes His light on one's soul, it is not easy to give up one's bad habits, to take up new ways, new duties. Do I see there is something I *must* do if I want to have the peace for which I shall pray next Sunday, if I want to offer myself a living sacrifice, as S. Paul tells us to do?

It is only God Who can help me.

He will give me grace, He will give me power. But I must take my hard things to Him in prayer, and I must not be surprised if these hard things go on seeming hard for a long time. Only of this I may be sure, there is nothing He asks me to do which He will not help me to do.

"O help us, Lord, each hour of need
Thy heavenly succour give;
Help us in thought, and word, and deed,
Each hour on earth we live." (279.)

THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

The Collect.

Almighty and everlasting God, Who dost govern all things in heaven and earth; mercifully hear the supplications of Thy people, and grant us Thy peace all the days of our life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"Almighty and everlasting God, Who dost govern all things in heaven and earth."

Text.—"The purpose of Him Who worketh all things after the counsel of His will" (Eph. i. 11).

Do I really believe this? God orders all things, directs all things. Then, though I cannot see it, all things are working out His purposes. A Christian who takes this home to himself, little by little, learns to trust God with his life, with everything.

Do I? It is not easy to do this always. A great sorrow comes, or a loss, or some hindrance to one's spiritual life; one sees wickedness all round one, one sees people who are slaves to sins of all sorts, one sees wicked people who *seem* to get on so well. All this is a trial to that calm faith, to that trust in God, which a Christian is meant to have; God knows it is hard, and the one thing to do always, when one

feels puzzled by the sadness and the sin of the world, is to pray. Pray to God, tell Him that one can't understand this dreadful trouble, or that one is miserable because there are such horrible sins in the world. Little by little I shall come to see how very slowly God is working out a great and wonderful plan, about which St. Paul teaches us in the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians. I shall come to see that this world, so full of puzzles and sadness and sin, is a great school, where we are taught and trained. I shall come, if day by day I pray to God, to see that the Cross of Jesus really shows one how to *look* at pain and sorrow and loss. And I shall really and truly get to feel that all things are governed, ruled, directed by God—my own life for instance. There is a beautiful saying of one who had lost her husband, and who had many other trials to bear: "I could not bear it if I did not see continually the finger of God throughout our story." That is what the poorest, most unlearned child of God can come to feel—the hand of a loving Father holding his throughout all the darkness of this world.

Therefore, when the sad times come, let me pray, "God, Who dost govern all things in heaven and earth, show Thy servant Thy work." Let me believe Thou art directing *this*, whatever it may be, of sorrow, sickness, or—what sometimes is harder to bear—difficulty, bewilderment caused by another's sin.

"Praise the Lord! ye heavens, adore Him;
Praise Him, Angels, in the height;
Sun and moon, rejoice before Him;
Praise Him, all ye stars and light;
Praise the Lord! for He hath spoken,
Worlds His mighty voice obeyed;
Laws, which never shall be broken,
For their guidance He hath made.

"Praise the Lord! for He is glorious;
Never shall His promise fail;
God hath made His saints victorious;
Sin and death shall not prevail.
Praise the God of our salvation;
Hosts on high, His power proclaim;
Heaven and earth, and all creation,
Laud and magnify His Name!" (292.)

Thought II.

"Mercifully hear the supplications of Thy people, and grant us Thy peace."

Text.—"Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart; prove me, and examine my thoughts. Look well if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps cxxxix. 23, 24).

That calm trust in God which my first Thought was about brings peace to the soul, one of those fruits of the Holy Spirit which all Christians are to bring forth in time. (It is a great help sometimes to think of oneself as a tree planted in the garden of the Lord; the thought, as it is brought out in the first Psalm, makes one feel that one depends on God for everything.)

Peace is a fruit for which I must pray. But let me to-day think of this. There is a false peace.

There are baptized Christians who, because they have been baptized and confirmed, and perhaps are communicants, yes, and even use confession, have never really given themselves to God. They have never taken Jesus for their Master, never felt Him to be their Saviour. And it is a great blessing when this false peace is broken up, when a real sense of sin comes, or some trouble shakes the soul. There is nothing sadder than to see people *contented* be-

cause they use God's means of grace without any striving for holiness.

Then there are people who at some time of their lives have been stirred by a sermon, or a service, and have been "converted." Then they have settled down; they say they have laid their sins on our Lord, and that all is well. But they forget that this first coming to our Lord was only a beginning; they forget that He must do a work in us, as well as *for* us. And they do not struggle to be holy, and are in as sad a state as the people who trust to using God's means of grace without using the grace. So one sees Christian people yielding to very real sins, and yet not the least alarmed. They cheat in their business, or yield to the sinful lusts of the flesh by over-much eating or drinking, or even by worse things. They say unkind things, they keep up quarrels, and are quite content not to be on speaking terms with some one; they take no care for people who work for them, they are not strict or severe with themselves and loving to others. Yet they feel no fear, because they go the round of religious duties, or because once they came under religious influences, and they say, "We trust in Jesus."

And, once more, there are people who are not even religious at all, but who say, "I keep myself respectable, and I never did any one any harm."

One has heard of drunkards on their deathbeds pleading that they never did any one any harm! And these people are in a state of false peace. It is far better to be anxious, uneasy about oneself than to be satisfied all is well—what the Bible calls "settling down on one's lees," like a bottle of wine which has been shaken, and which, when quiet, settles down with the lees or dregs comfortably at the bottom. Am I in a state of false peace? "Search me, O God, and try me."

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
'Behold, I freely give
The living water, thirsty one,
Stoop down, and drink, and live':
I came to Jesus, and I drank
Of that life-giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in Him." (257.)

Thought III.

"And grant us Thy peace all the days of our life."

Text.—"He is our peace" (Eph. ii. 14).

I thought of false peace. May it please God never to allow me to sink into false peace.

But there is that blessed fruit—true peace. I thought yesterday how much better it is to be anxious about oneself than to be in a false peace. But neither is a right state. God means His children to live in His family as children who *know* they are sinful but forgiven children. And so this peace of God is rooted in penitence, sorrow for sin, and grows up watered by His grace and depending entirely upon Him. That perhaps is the difference between true and false peace. True peace comes from utterly trusting in God, depending on Him (and this is true conversion); false peace from trusting in something outside our souls, something we do or that we think God did long ago, not in His present living work in our souls. Peace begins in one really knowing one is a sinner, and that one needs our Lord. There are some happy souls who have never wandered very far from Him, yet even they in their innocence need His daily washing, and know their needs. But for most Christians there comes a time when a deep sense of sin rushes over the soul as it did over St. Peter's, and when

one feels one's need of forgiveness: "against Thee only have I sinned." How do Christians get what God assuredly means them to get—the sense of forgiveness? Some win it by prayer and tears, and what the Bible calls "wrestling," and they feel they want no more than the absolutions in church, and the blessed Sacrament of Christ's body and blood. (A Christian who does not *want* Holy Communion has much need to pray for a right judgment, and should ask for instruction.) But many of us who are weaker, or, may be, humbler, feel we need the grace of absolution. And these come, and, in the presence of God's minister, who represents the whole Church, tell out their sins and receive forgiveness, the message of absolution pronounced by Christ's minister. And the grace of absolution brings to the soul of the penitent the deep, true sense of pardon. Many Christians who are trying to live close to God find that this personal assurance of forgiveness is a priceless blessing.

Then from this deep, abiding sorrow for sin, and assurance of being forgiven, there grows up the deep, true peace of the soul. Not all at once. There is a great deal of fighting with sin, and many fears; but little by little I shall find, if only I will bring my sins to the Lord Jesus and ask Him for pardon, there will grow up a feeling of humble, trusting confidence. Resting in Jesus, safe in His arms, I shall look to God for everything; I shall give to Him "the praise of every victory won." I shall not be afraid of what life has for me, because I am God's forgiven child "accepted in the Beloved."

"Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin?
The Blood of Jesus whispers peace within.

"Peace, perfect peace, by thronging duties pressed?
To do the will of Jesus, this is rest.

"Peace, perfect peace, with sorrows surging round?
On Jesus' bosom nought but calm is found.

"Peace, perfect peace, with loved ones far away?
In Jesus' keeping we are safe and they.

"Peace, perfect peace, our future all unknown?
Jesus we know, and He is on the throne.

"Peace, perfect peace, death shadowing us and ours?
Jesus has vanquished death and all its powers.

"It is enough: earth's struggles soon shall cease,
And Jesus call us to Heaven's perfect peace."

(537)

THOUGHT IV.

"All the days of our life."

Texts.—"LO, I AM WITH YOU ALWAY" (St. Matt. xxviii. 20).

"JESUS CHRIST THE SAME YESTERDAY, AND TO-DAY, AND FOR EVER" (Heb. xiii. 8).

Yes, that is what God's pardon, God's peace, God's strength are meant to last for.

Not just when one is young and fresh, but in the long, hard days of middle life—of cares, of troubles; and in old age too.

I who read these words may be full of cares, and sorrows, and with very little time to pray. But this peace may be mine if I will ask for it. One is never too young to ask for God's peace. One is never too old.

Then these words are to be our stay, our comfort in changes. Sometimes life *frightens* one; perhaps one's home is broken up, or one has to go away among strangers; or a bit of work is given one which seems too hard; or a

great sorrow is seen to be drawing near, and the poor shrinking soul cries out in the darkness ; or one has to lie on a sick bed, and, it may be, lie long alone. In all these times, the Lord comes and says, " Lo, I am with you alway." Yes, one can always have Him, and His gifts, His forgiveness, His peace are always fresh and new. His presence goes with us and gives us rest.

So, can I *pray* this Collect ? Only if I am one of the Lord's people. Am I ? It ought not to be difficult to say. And if I am not, why not ? This very week let me come to Him, and He can show me how to begin to win His peace.

" Alleluia ! not as orphans
Are we left in sorrow now ;
Alleluia ! He is near us,
Faith believes, nor questions how :
Though the cloud from sight received Him
When the forty days were o'er,
Shall our hearts forget His promise,
'I am with you evermore'?" (316.)

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

The Collect.

Almighty and everlasting God, mercifully look upon our infirmities, and in all our dangers and necessities stretch forth Thy right hand to help and defend us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"Almighty and everlasting God, mercifully look upon our infirmities."

Text.—"Who forgiveth all thy sin, and healeth all thine infirmities" (Ps. ciii. 3).

There is a line in a lovely poem which says, "The Lord knows all, yet loves us better than He knows." [1]

God our Father knows our weakness both of body and mind. We prayed last Sunday for a great gift—peace; and to win that gift one has to fight with sin, and sorrow for sin, and struggle. Sometimes a Christian (and these Collects, in fact the whole Prayer Book, are only meant for real, converted Christians) will feel very much discouraged by frequent failures in all sorts of ways. Many really good Christians are hindered, so it seems to them, by some weakness.

It may be a bodily weakness. "If only I were a little stronger, or a little cleverer, or if I could argue, I could serve God much better." And sometimes one seems so hindered by some weakness such as deafness or unhandy

[1] *Christian Year*, 24th Sunday after Trinity.

ways. Well, God can and does make allowances for all these things, these weaknesses, getting knocked up easily, not being quick with one's speech or one's hands. He will look upon these,—He will turn them into means of grace.

But there are faults, not mortal sins, which kill the life of God in the soul, but little tiny weaknesses which hinder us—a very short, sharp manner, a habit of getting easily offended, a habit of fussing over very small troubles, of getting into great panics on journeys, of fussing over one's health, and so on. Men and women alike have these infirmities; and though they are not great sins, yet they often become faults. But God is so tender. He will make allowances, and He will help us to overcome them.

Then there are infirmities in our spiritual life. Some people who are really trying to please God find themselves so full of infirmities. Wandering thoughts in prayer, for instance; and if they are really trying, God will look on this infirmity. And some cannot meditate well, and some people find praying for others difficult, and so on. If these "infirmities" are taken to God, He will "look upon them."

"Guide me, O Thou great Redeemer,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but Thou art mighty;
Hold me with Thy powerful hand;
Bread of Heaven,
Feed me now and evermore." (196.)

Thought II.

"And in all our dangers and necessities."

Texts.—"THERE SHALL NO EVIL HAPPEN UNTO THEE, NEITHER SHALL ANY PLAGUE COME NIGH THY DWELLING" (Ps. xci. 10).

"MY GOD SHALL FULFIL EVERY NEED OF YOURS" (Phil. iv. 19).

There are dangers, there are needs in the life of every Christian.

It is well for me to face the dangers of my daily life. What are they? It may be, of course, dangers to my body. Some people have to work at unhealthy trades. If such is my case, I may indeed pray God to look upon my danger; and I must be careful to take all the precautions that doctors have recommended. People are so apt to grow careless.

Then I may be called to face danger suddenly, an accident, a sudden outbreak of infectious illness. Always there is time to lift up one's heart in prayer to God, and He will help one to be calm, collected, helpful. Not like a stewardess of a steamer, who, having been saved in a shipwreck and put in a boat, declined to help the one lady in the boat who had been baling out the water for two hours, on the ground that she wasn't paid to bale. The habit of constantly praying to God will make one unselfish in the hour of danger.

Dangers to our souls. One often has to face these. Some of us, rich and poor alike, have to live among people who do not care about God, who say and do things that are wrong, sometimes positively wicked. Some of us have to face attacks on our faith, some of us have to hear bad language. Some good Christians, for the love of Christ, have to go among people who lead bad lives, and are obliged to hear of terrible sin.

God will let none of these things hurt His servants if only they will pray.

"Necessities." We need many things for our souls and bodies. Do I feel that I need more teaching, more help, more opportunities to come to church, to Holy Communion, more quiet time to pray? God knows all these needs, and will hear my prayers. And I may have need for my bodily life—better health, more leisure, sufficient means,

more opportunities to make the best of my life. God will look on these necessities.

"Take not thought for food or raiment,
Careful one, so anxiously;
For the King Himself provideth
Food and clothes for thee.

"He who daily feeds the sparrows,
He who clothes the lilies bright,
More than birds and flowers holds thee
Precious in His sight.

"Wouldst thou give a stone, a serpent
To thy pleading child for food?
And shall not thy Heavenly Father
Give thee what is good?

"On the heart that careth for thee
Rest thou, then, from sorrow free;
For of all most tender fathers
None so good as He.

"Seek thou first His gracious promise,
Treasure stored in Heaven above;
So thou may'st entrust all other
Safely to His love.

"Unto Thee, O bounteous Father,
Glory, honour, praise be done;
With the Son and Holy Spirit,
God for ever One." (539.)

THOUGHT III.

"Stretch forth Thy right hand to help and defend us."

Text.—"THE RIGHT HAND OF THE LORD BRINGETH MIGHTY THINGS TO PASS" (Ps. cxviii. 16).

God's right hand, of course, means His power.

Do I think at all of the power of God?

It may be that I look round and see so much evil, or I look into my own heart and see so much sin and weakness, and I am discouraged.

And sometimes Christians who are fighting very hard against the tyranny of drink, or the awful reign of lust, get sad. Wickedness seems to be victorious. Now, at any time, if this sadness comes over my heart, and if I am turned to God and want to work for Him, I shall at times be sad. Let me rest my mind on God. He is working. He is in heaven. And my work is not lost, whether it be my fight against *my* sins or against sin in the world.

And it will happen to us who are trying to be Christians that sometimes it seems as if what seems to us to be the full, true faith of the Church was in danger.

Or we are disturbed by reading something in a newspaper (we forget that people who write about the faith in newspapers are not always, or indeed often, instructed Christians), or we hear of some poor ignorant people who think they are doing God service by attacking their fellow-Christians; or some clever book, or some novel perhaps disturbs us. At all these times, whether there is real cause for anxiety or not, we must remember God's power. He is in heaven. He will not let a hair of our heads perish. The gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church. There may come dark moments, but God is never far away. All a Christian has to do is to be faithful until the Lord calls him, "Come up higher."

"Then fear not, faint not, halt not now;
In Jesus Christ be strong;
To Him shall all the nations bow,
And sing the triumph song." (586.)

THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

The Collect.

O God, who knowest us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers, that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright; grant to us such strength and protection, as may support us in all dangers, and carry us through all temptations; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"O God, Who knowest us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers, that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright."

Text.—"But when I said, My foot hath slipt; Thy mercy, O Lord, held me up" (Ps. xciv. 18).

The Collects for the Sundays after the Epiphany are very beautiful. I must remember to turn back to them at the Trinity season if there are more than twenty-five Sundays after Trinity.

We are taught to-day again to think of dangers, and especially of dangers to our souls. And the special lesson is, not the dangers so much as our weakness. We are like children just learning to walk, or—like invalids who have been long ill—fail. What is it which makes us so weak? Sin. Sin indulged in.

To give way continually to what we call *little* sins—losing one's temper, lying too long in bed, idle gossip, sins of the tongue—weaken our nature. We get into bad habits. That is why a converted Christian who is beginning to serve God needs *rules* to make a sort of support for his life, for what he has to do. That is why it is so beautiful, so blessed, never to leave the green pastures into which we are brought at Baptism. A child who from the beginning is taught to fight against small sins of greediness, temper, untruthfulness, because he is Christ's soldier, who gets into habits of daily prayer, and of looking back on the day which is gone, and seeing and confessing the faults of that day, is, by God's grace, laying the foundation of a holy life. He is answering God's call; he is a tree in the garden of the Lord, and God is helping him against his frail nature. And any one who begins to serve God after years of neglect has to acknowledge his frailty. All of us are frail, but some are more so than others, and to-morrow's thought will teach us how to become less frail. Do I take home to myself the frailty of my nature? Do I feel how often I break my resolutions, give way to sins with my tongue, give way to self-indulgence?

We are set in the midst of great dangers. We are tempted to put God out of sight, to order our lives without any reference to Him. That is the worst of all dangers, and the most common very often. And some are sorely beset by dangers to purity, to temperance, to faith in God. In all these many and great dangers we *must* see our own weakness.

"Be Thou my Guardian and my Guide,
And hear me when I call;
Let not my slippery footsteps slide,
And hold me lest I fall.

"The world, the flesh, and Satan dwell
Around the path I tread;
O save me from the snares of hell,
Thou Quickener of the dead.

"And if I tempted am to sin,
And outward things are strong,
Do Thou, O Lord, keep watch within,
And save my soul from wrong.

"Still let me ever watch and pray,
And feel that I am frail;
That if the Tempter cross my way,
Yet he may not prevail." (282.)

THOUGHT II.

"Grant to us such strength."

Text.—"I LIVE; AND YET NO LONGER I, BUT CHRIST LIVETH IN ME" (Gal. ii. 20).

What is it will strengthen our frail nature?

God Himself. The very life of God. Little by little, as I have read over and over again, Jesus takes our nature and changes it. At Baptism this new nature is as it were planted in us. We have to go on, and by *receiving* and *using* the fresh supplies of grace, of Christ's life, which are given to us to strengthen the life sense in us. And at every turn of our lives God meets us, as has been said, with a fresh supply of grace; most of all in the Holy Communion. Then the very life of Jesus is given to the soul, and the Lord does not, unless we drive Him away, withdraw His presence. But we must walk with God in this strengthening of our souls. Do I walk with God? That is, do I try to form habits which by degrees will grow into principles, and principles form character?

Do I understand this? Well, I can see that if a person gets into a habit of always fighting for his own way in things big and little, he will grow to feel that he must come first, and that other people must go to the wall. It will be his principle, his motive, and this will surely build up a selfish character.

So a person who wants to please God, if he begins by forming good habits, by making and keeping simple rules about prayers, Bible reading, church going, will be forming a principle of putting God first, and by degrees will, walking with God's grace, build up a strong character. So with all our life. If I will ask God to strengthen me against idleness, or ill temper, or anything else, He will show me how I should get into good habits—a habit of getting up in time and going to bed in time, a habit of checking angry words, or of making rules against over-eating, and of never taking strong drink — odd glasses of wine between meals — will all go to form principles of industry, gentleness, temperance, which will in time be part of the character Jesus is forming in me. So with purity. A habit of checking any wish to know details of horrible sin, of never reading reports of sins against purity, of never talking about sin needlessly, of checking rough "larking"—all these habits are equally profitable for boys and for girls, for men and women, and do build up the Christian to be "pure in heart."

"O Saviour, may we never rest
Till Thou art formed within,
Till Thou hast calmed our troubled breast,
And crushed the power of sin." (272.)

Thought III.

"Grant to us such strength and protection, as may support us in all dangers, and carry us through all temptations."

Text.—"THERE HATH NO TEMPTATION TAKEN YOU BUT SUCH AS MAN CAN BEAR: BUT GOD IS FAITHFUL, WHO WILL NOT SUFFER YOU TO BE TEMPTED ABOVE THAT YE ARE ABLE" (1 Cor. x. 13).

God's care, God's love is all around us. He lives in us, but He arranges for us, He protects us.

Dangers. Do I feel the dangers are so great? But if I will commit myself, that is, give myself to God, He will make these dangers real helps. To have come through some great danger to my soul, into which I was brought (not one into which I wilfully ran) will make me stronger, and God's children do find the protecting, sheltering love of God is very real. Friends are sent to us to help us, people who seemed to be going to hurt us are softened, and, above all, God gives us that faith in Him, that sense of His presence, which keep one calm in very bad times, in dangers to body or to soul, and carry us through all temptations.

No temptation need overcome me. God will always make a way to escape. What are my temptations? Do I ever look forward to the day that is coming, and try to foresee my temptations? It does not take long, and it is a safeguard. So and so will try my temper, so and so will want me to go for a pleasure trip on Sunday, which will not give time for church. I shall perhaps hear evil talk, bad words at my work. Shall I be tempted to do it badly, or to cheat? Is there any one to whom I am likely to be unkind, to scold, or neglect, or hurt? What about my food? is there any temptation to me to be self-indulgent? Have I any temptation to indulge in odd glasses of wine at odd times, or

to indulge in strong drink at all? Is there any person I shall meet, any book I shall be inclined to read, any amusement I shall want to join which may lead me wrong? and so on. Every Christian knows that through the long day there will be temptations, but God can carry us through them all. Every temptation resisted strengthens the Christian character. My temptations may be very strong, my life very hard, but God put me in my particular place, and He means me to work for Him and with Him here. If I am really living in a place and among people who make it hard to be good, I am like a soldier who is at the front, exposed to the enemy's fire. God will protect me, uphold me.

"Thou cam'st not to thy place by accident,
It is the very place God meant for thee." (*Trench.*)

THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

The Collect.

O Lord, we beseech Thee to keep Thy Church and household continually in Thy true religion; that they who do lean only upon the hope of Thy heavenly grace may evermore be defended by Thy mighty power; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"O Lord, we beseech Thee to keep Thy Church and household."

Text.—"We are members of His Body" (Eph. v. 30).

Christians make up one great family in Christ. God is our Father, our Lord Jesus is our Head, the Holy Spirit is our life.

A household. We in England are taught so much about *home*, about the love of home. Do I take home to myself that by my Baptism I am brought into a great world-wide household, in which I can find shelter, food, medicine, love. The Church of God is our home, and in and through the Church God is always meeting us with gifts for every need—food for our souls, supplies of grace for every fresh circumstance, restoration for us when we fall into sin. Do I try to value my blessings, to act to other Christians as being my

brothers and sisters in Christ? Do I long to bring others to share these blessings? If I read my New Testament carefully, I shall see that all blessings come to Christians because they are members of Christ's Body—the Church. It is not putting the Church in the place of Christ, for, as a great writer [1] has said: "In the Church men are brought into contact with Christ. Christ is the way to the Father, and the Church is the way to Him."

Do I take home to myself all the joy of this life in Christ's Church?

I may be poor, or unlearned, or ill, but I am one of Christ's members, and He sends no gift to His Church which may not be mine. I have brothers and sisters everywhere on earth; I am one with the blessed in Paradise. Do I pray for my brethren? Do I long for the peace of the Church? Do I pray for the spread of the Church?

"God the Spirit dwells within thee,
His Society Divine,
His the living word thou keepest,
His thy apostolic line.
Ancient prayer and song liturgic,
Creeds that change not to the end,
As His gift we have received them,
As His charge we will defend.

"Alleluia, Alleluia,
To the Father, Spirit, Son,
In Whose will the Church at warfare
With the Church at rest is one;
So to Thee we sing in union,
God in earth and Heaven adored,
Alleluia, Alleluia,
Holy, Holy, Holy Lord." (603.)

[1] Milligan on the Ascension.

Thought II.

"Continually in Thy true religion."

Text.—"Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, which Thou hast given Me" (St. John xvii. 11).

That is the Church's great need—to be kept in true religion. Religion is that which binds us to God, and the true religion is that God was made Man for us men, and He is taking us into fellowship with Him. That is what our Lord prayed for in His last great prayer. The religion of Jesus—nothing less: God joined to man, and man joined to God. There are false ideas about religion which sometimes hurt Christians inside the Church, and which hinder the Church's work.

Sometimes people care only for outside religion, and treat the blessed sacraments as if they were spells which would save them against their wills. Oftener, far oftener, people forget that God gives us grace through His Church, and that if we neglect His means, we are disobeying Him and putting our souls in danger. These are mistakes which are often made, and which are against true religion.

Then true religion always puts God's glory first, before everything. A true religion makes people put God first in *worship*. This is what we find in the Church of God. We are taught—especially in the great act of worship, the Eucharist—to put God first, to worship Him first, to put our needs, our wants, last.

True religion makes people holy. The Church of God is to build up saints.

Now I may feel with deep, true thankfulness that the great Catholic Church is being kept as a whole in true religion. But her children do not always use the grace God gives them, and some of them slip away. Am I being kept in true religion? Am I living a life of fellowship with God

in His Church? That is, am I trying to please God, and using all the help He gives me? Is my religion one that has to do with my life in the world?

Does my religion make me know the joy of worship?

"Let every thought and work and word
To Thee be ever given;
Then life shall be Thy service, Lord,
And death the gate of Heaven." (349.)

THOUGHT III.

"That they who do lean only upon the hope of Thy heavenly grace may evermore be defended by Thy mighty power."

Text.—"MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR THEE" (2 Cor. xii. 9).

This is the lesson which the Church as a whole and each single Christian has to learn, that it is only God's grace which can be the defence of the whole Church, of each Christian.

In times of danger to the Church, people are so apt to think that if we only give in to the world, and give up some article of the Creed, or some bit of teaching, some rule of life, all will go well.

I must remember this; for it is needful for each Christian to have a right opinion.

We must each of us remember our Lord's words when Satan showed Him the glory of this world, and offered all to Him on condition that the Lord should worship him. Nothing can be given up of our faith, our worship, our service to please those who do not serve God. This is not a matter which is far away from my daily life. Over and over again I have heard it said that many more people would come over to us if the Church would not insist on holding to her Creed, would alter the services, would not

press the sacrifice of Christ so much, would not be so strict about the law of marriage, etc.

Sometimes—and it might well happen to the Church in my time—it seems as if the Church were in great need of the help of the world, of money and so on; and it seems that this help would come—if something were given up.

So it is with each Christian. There comes a time to most of us when we must see that each of us only trusts to God's grace, to God's help. The world, our world, will point out to each of us, in the particular way which tempts us, how easy it would be to live a comfortable life if only we would give up *something*. Then it is that a Christian must lean on God only. Then it is that to the Church as a whole, or to one single Christian soul, God shows His power, *manifests* it. There was a time when one single man named Athanasius stood up against the whole power of the world for the faith of Christ. He seemed as if he must fail, as if the true religion of Christ must be crushed out; but no, we know that God helped him, and the faith triumphed.

So it is always. One single Christian dares to stand up against some evil custom, and God shows His power and helps that Christian. I may have heard of Lord Shaftesbury and all he did, yet when he began his great work he had really nothing to help him but God's grace.

So it is with us all. We stand up against some wicked, dishonest trick of one's trade, against drink, against lust; and if only we lean on God's grace, He will indeed give us a great Epiphany, a manifestation of His power.

"Lead us, Heavenly Father, lead us
O'er the world's tempestuous sea:
Guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us,
For we have no help but Thee;
Yet possessing every blessing,
If our God our Father be." (281.)

THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

The Collect.

O God, Whose Blessed Son was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil, and make us the sons of God, and heirs of eternal life; grant us, we beseech Thee, that, having this hope, we may purify ourselves, even as He is pure; that, when He shall appear again with power and great glory, we may be made like unto Him in His eternal and glorious kingdom; where with Thee, O Father, and Thee, O Holy Ghost, He liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Thought I.

"O God, Whose blessed Son was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil."

Text.—"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 St. John iii. 8).

This is a lovely Collect, and one which equally suits the season just before Advent, when there are more than twenty-five Sundays after Trinity, and the closing Sunday of the Epiphany season. For in Advent and in Epiphany we are thinking of the manifestation, the showing forth, the Epiphany of our Lord. The eternal Son of God was mani-

fested, He came as man. Why? All this wonder, this inexpressible love was for us. Now no one can explain the terrible mystery of evil, the existence of the devil. Do I ever feel distressed because there are great mysteries? I need not. No one can explain to a child all that he will know when he is grown up and has been educated, and understands about, it may be, music, or language, or machinery. And the very greatest human understanding in comparison with God—what is it? Surely the difference is far greater than the difference between a child's mind and a great man's mind.

And to-day's prayer takes for granted this awful mystery of evil, and praises God for the manifestation of Jesus.

Sin, the works of the devil, is the great evil of the world. Think what it would be if a large number of Christians lived exactly as our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount tells them to live. And the Lord gives us power to do so. By His death and His resurrection He has destroyed the power of the devil over Christians.

If I want to know what the works of the devil are, the Lord Himself tells me. Murder, lying, and so on. Each of us can be set free from the power of evil. Do I ever hear people say there is no devil? I need only look at the people who are slaves to drink, I need only speak to those who are living lives in sin, I need only once hear the awful curses of those who hate God, and I shall have no doubt.

But, the Lord has come, is coming, will come. Has He been manifested, shown in me? Am I yielding myself to Him, so that He may destroy the works of the devil *in* me?

Once more, if ever I have to try to save one who is living in sin, or who is the slave of drink, or of any other bondage, I must remember that it is only Christ who can save. He will bless all sorts of means, if one prays about them and asks Him; but it is no manner of use trying to drive out the

devil unless one is trying to open the soul to the blessed Spirit of God.

"Therefore in our hymns we pray Thee,
Grant us, blessed Trinity,
At the last to keep Thine Easter
In our home beyond the sky,
There to Thee for ever singing
Alleluia joyfully." (82.)

Thought II.

"And make us the sons of God, and heirs of eternal life."

Text.—"Beloved, now are we the sons of God" (from the Epistle).

This was the second purpose of our Lord's coming in the flesh, becoming man. That every one who accepts Him may be God's child.

One often learns this when one is very young, that in our Baptism we are made children of God, and one gets so used to the thought that the extreme wonder and joy and depth of the truth hardly touches one. Do I know this? I am probably not a very important person as the world counts importance, and yet God loves *me*, cares for me, is giving me just what I need for my soul's good, will give everything I need to make me holy.

Only I must answer to His love. Am I a dutiful child in my Father's house, putting His will first, trying to do what He wants His children to do, loving His other children?

An heir of eternal life. This is what God promises us. It is right to do one's utmost to use this world rightly, to use all one's opportunities for learning, for rightful happiness, for bettering oneself; but there are times when a

Christian does feel that the eternal life, the sure hope of entering in, is his or her only satisfaction. The hope of "seeing Him as He is." Is my life in Christ a growing life? that is, am I each year a little less unlike Christ?

Is my love for God making me trust Him more?—in short, does it make any difference at all to me that I am a child of God?

"Father of Heaven, Whose love profound
A ransom for our souls hath found,
Before Thy Throne we sinners bend,
To us Thy pardoning love extend.

"Almighty Son, Incarnate Word,
Our Prophet, Priest, Redeemer, Lord,
Before Thy Throne we sinners bend,
To us Thy saving grace extend.

"Eternal Spirit, by Whose breath
The soul is raised from sin and death,
Before Thy Throne we sinners bend,
To us Thy quickening power extend.

"Thrice holy! Father, Spirit, Son;
Mysterious Godhead, Three in One,
Before Thy Throne we sinners bend,
Grace, pardon, life to us extend." (164.)

THOUGHT III.

"Grant us, we beseech Thee, that having this hope, we may purify ourselves, even as He is pure."

Text.—"AND EVERY MAN THAT HATH THIS HOPE IN HIM PURIFIETH HIMSELF, EVEN AS HE IS PURE" (1 St. John iii. 3).

I have been taught to think of very high and wonderful things, of being really and truly a child of God—of living

for ever with Him ; and if these things are to be real, living truths, I must pray this prayer to-day. God does an infinite, a boundless amount for each soul by His grace, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, by the life of Jesus Who dwells in us ; but each soul must work with Him. One is apt either to think one does everything for oneself, or else that once one has come to Christ there is nothing else to do.

St. John says of Christians, that if they have such a glorious hope, they must purify themselves.

This is to be the work of our life on earth—to grow by God's grace fitted for Him, using this world (as a poet who will never be forgotten teaches us) as a mount of purification, in the ascending of which the human spirit purifies itself, and becomes worthy to ascend to heaven.[1]

Do I think of this? If I do, troubles, sorrows, worries become means by which I may purify myself from whatever is my chief sin.

I shall try to cut out my pride, my bad temper, my jealousy, my unkind speeches, my dishonest practices, my sloth, my over-much care for food or drink, my impurity. Is my life at all like this? Am I each year getting rid of some fault? If I will read the Epistle for this week on my knees, praying God to teach me, I shall see what sort of life a Christian should in time come to lead, a life in which no wilful sin is ever committed, though, as I shall see in another place, one grows in tenderness of conscience, one grows in the sense of sin.

Let me pray to God at least to do this—to show me how greatly I need purification, cleansing, and then He will lead me to cry to Him to cleanse me, and all He sends me I will take as merciful chastening.

Is there anything I can do at once so that I may work

[1] Dante's *Purgatory*, i. 4.

with God in His work in my soul?—any bad habit, any sin I must forsake?—anything which makes me unfit for the vision of God, for heaven?

"Jesu, Thou joy of loving hearts,
Thou Fount of life, Thou Light of men!
From the best bliss that earth imparts
We turn unfilled to Thee again.

"Thy truth unchanged hath ever stood;
Thou savest those that on Thee call;
To them that seek Thee Thou art good;
To them that find Thee All in all.

"We taste Thee, O Thou living Bread,
And long to feast upon Thee still;
We drink of Thee, the Fountain-head,
And thirst our souls from Thee to fill.

"Our restless spirits yearn for Thee,
Where'er our changeful lot is cast;
Glad when Thy gracious smile we see,
Blest when our faith can hold Thee fast.

"O Jesu, ever with us stay;
Make all our moments calm and bright;
Chase the dark night of sin away;
Shed o'er the world Thy holy light." (190.)

Thought IV.

"That, when He shall appear again with power and great glory, we may be made like unto Him in His eternal and glorious kingdom; where with Thee, O Father, and Thee, O Holy Ghost, He liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end."

Text.—"It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear, we

SHALL BE LIKE HIM; FOR WE SHALL SEE HIM AS HE IS" (from the Epistle).

This is a wonderful thought. That all God does for us and in us, all the work He asks us to do in purifying ourselves, and in loving service, is for this—that we may grow to be like God. If I read St. Paul's wonderful Epistle to the Ephesians I shall see this thought brought out.

It is so wonderful that we sinful, struggling people, some of us so ignorant, some of us so fond of money and pleasure, are to have the hope always before us of being made like Christ.

Yet the only way we know God is by Christ's life; and He showed us the sort of actions which are like God. Therefore, to be kind, to be merciful, is to be like Christ, is to be like God. It is not dragging God down to man, it is raising man to God.

What do I think being a Christian really means? It does not mean having certain phrases on one's lips; it does not mean anything but living Christ's life. And surely I shall see how that Holy Communion, prayers, Bible reading, and all religious helps are simply for this purpose—to help us to lead this life. The Church of God is in the world only for this—to make people like Christ. How dreadful, then, it is for Christians to attack their fellow-Christians. If people are in error, the way to convince them is by love, by a holy life, not by denouncing them and trying to drive them out. Please God I who read this will try to live Christ's life in this world, for no one who has not begun to be like Christ in this world can hope to be made like Him in the world to come.

Therefore let me pray to our Lord to give me a great manifestation of Himself, that I may see what He would have me to do and be, and that my life may be like His in

love, in kindness, in gentleness to sinners, in obedience, in prayerfulness, so that through His mercy I may one day see Him and not be ashamed.

"Lord Jesus, Whom, by power Divine
Now hidden 'neath the outward sign,
We worship and adore,
Grant, when the veil away is rolled
With open face we may behold
Thyself for evermore." (314.)

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

The Collect.

O Lord, we beseech Thee favourably to hear the prayers of Thy people; that we, who are justly punished for our offences, may be mercifully delivered by Thy goodness, for the glory of Thy name; through Jesus Christ our Saviour, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Thought I.

"O Lord, we beseech Thee favourably to hear the prayers of Thy people."

Text.—"Hear my crying, O God: give ear unto my prayer" (Ps. lxi. 1).

Lent is very near, and this week's collect leads us to thoughts of prayer, to thoughts about our sins. For no matter how far a Christian may have advanced on the way of holiness, sorrow for sin will be always in his heart. Thank God St. John's words in his first Epistle come quite true of many, many Christians—about those who abide in God sinning not; that is, they do not live in a state of sin; mortal sin, which kills the life of God in the soul has no power over them, because they abide in Christ. But no less true are St. John's words in that same Epistle, that "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves," for every Christian grows in a sense of sin, and small faults are felt

more and more to be sins—failures in temper, in kindness, in truth, and so on.

And so we pray God to hear our prayers favourably. What sort of prayers will they be which He will hear favourably? As a Christian grows in holiness, he or she learns better how to pray. Our prayers come to be more and more prayers for God's grace, for the gifts of the Holy Spirit, for one's fellow-Christians; and as Lent comes near one learns each year to pray for forgiveness for oneself, for one's country, for the whole Church.

Are my prayers such as God will hear favourably? Do I try to pray better, to pray for others and for myself? What do I pray for most? Is God's forgiveness a real need to me? For this is the lesson of this week: the real burden sin is, the need one has to be forgiven. Have I ever yet felt my need?

"Thou art coming to a King,
Large petitions with thee bring;
For His grace and power are such,
None can ever ask too much.

"With my burden I begin;
Lord, remove this load of sin;
Let Thy Blood, for sinners spilt,
Set my conscience free from guilt." (527.)

Thought II.

"That we who are justly punished for our offences."

Text.—"For I acknowledge my faults" (Ps. li. 3).

This is the very hardest of lessons. Only when one has learnt many lessons in God's school, only when one has given oneself entirely to Christ, is it possible to look on

suffering in this way—that it is sent by God to train us. It is not, so to speak, to pay us out, not as a hard, stern master has been known to punish a slave, but as a loving Father who does not mean to leave us alone. There is nothing so sad as to be *left alone* by God. But a Christian who has troubles of any kind to bear—poverty, sickness, the loss of the very dearest, unkindness, unjust blame—if he or she will only try and will ask for help, can use them as God's merciful bit of discipline—of punishment it may be. It is not because one has been very wicked; no, perhaps if one had been very wicked, one might have been spared some suffering. No, but that our loving Father sees in each Christian to whom He sends suffering the need of discipline, or of medicine, or of sharp chastening. And it is the most blessed thing to answer to this teaching, to bear whatever God sends patiently. By-and-by such wonderful fruits come out on the branch of the vine which God has been cleansing.

How do I bear my troubles, great and small? If I have anything to bear in my life, do I try to bear it without continually grumbling? Do I see anything in me which needs checking?—any fault which sorrow or sickness or disappointment should check? And as one grows in the Christian life, one should *feel* the troubles of the Church. I may hear very holy things, very good people, being attacked; it may be quite possible that suffering may come upon many of us who hold the full truth about the Sacraments; it may be that there will be plenty of suffering in store for Catholic Christians. It will be a great blessing if all of us who care for beautiful services, who use Confession, who are very often present at the Eucharist, do with all our hearts set ourselves to see if we have valued our blessings—then any trouble God sends us will be only a blessing.

One who calls himself or herself a Catholic should be

more careful about Bible reading, about prayer, about kindness, love for the souls of others, love for missions, than any one else. And, again, I should feel my country's sins. God has been sending England many troubles lately. Do I pray that every English man and woman may be led to think rightly about our duties to the natives of countries which we conquer? Do I pray about temperance, purity? Does it make me ashamed to know so many of my countrymen live lives without God? These are the sort of thoughts which this Collect suggests, for I must remember that a Church or a nation is made up of individuals, and the sins of a Church and of a nation are the sins of individuals.[1]

"Shepherd Divine, our wants relieve
In this our evil day;
To all Thy tempted followers give
The power to watch and pray.

"Long as our fiery trials last,
Long as the cross we bear,
O let our souls on Thee be cast
In never-ceasing prayer.

"The Spirit of interceding grace
Give us in faith to claim;
To wrestle till we see Thy Face,
And know Thy hidden Name.

"Till Thou Thy perfect love impart,
Till Thou Thyself bestow,
Be this the cry of every heart,
'I will not let Thee go.'

[1] Written in 1900. There is a little book by Father Adderly, *Social Prayers*, published by Wells Gardner, which only costs 4*d.*, and which helps one much to take home to oneself the sins of one's country. The book of intercessions, *Sursum Corda*, supplies every want.

"I will not let Thee go, unless
Thou tell Thy Name to me;
With all Thy great Salvation bless,
And make me all like Thee.

"Then let me on the mountain-top
Behold Thine open Face;
Where faith in sight is swallowed up,
And prayer in endless praise." (248.)

Thought III.

"May be mercifully delivered."

Text.—"O Lord, let it be Thy pleasure to deliver me: make haste, O Lord, to help me" (Ps. xl. 16.)

This is what God always does for souls who answer to His training.

He does deliver us. He is not always giving us burdens to carry; or if it seems as if He had given us a burden of sorrow or sickness to carry for life, He will help us. Our Lord Jesus will, as it were, carry it for us, for as He bore sorrow for us, so He bears it *in* us. I was thinking yesterday of the troubles which God sometimes sends to a nation or to a Church.

They must be used rightly, for they are very great opportunities, but God does deliver the nation or the Church.

And if, as I am thinking over this Collect, I hear of great troubles in the Church, I must pray God to deliver us—that He will heal our divisions, that He will make Christians cease from persecuting other Christians, that He will bring people who belong to the same branch of the Catholic Church together, that they may see how much they agree, not how much they differ. And for one's country: I may pray that God will set us free from war and famine, and

also from the awful slavery we are in to the drink trade, to lust, to dishonesty.

And for myself. Am I in any trouble? Not only about great troubles may I pray, but little ones too. Does my walk in life give me trouble? Is there some one who hurts me, or is unkind? or have I not enough to live on? or is there some trouble in the life of my soul?

About all these I can pray. God will, in His time, "compass me about with songs of deliverance," as the Psalm says. Let me pray God to set me free in His time, if it be His will, from whatever trouble is in me; but let me pray Him also for grace to use it rightly—to learn all He wants me to learn from it.

"Alleluia, song of sweetness,
Voice of joy that cannot die;
Alleluia is the anthem
Ever dear to choirs on high;
In the House of God abiding,
Thus they sing eternally.

"Alleluia thou resoundest,
True Jerusalem and free;
Alleluia, joyful Mother,
All thy children sing with thee;
But by Babylon's sad waters
Mourning exiles now are we.

"Alleluia cannot always
Be our song while here below;
Alleluia our transgressions
Make us for awhile forego;
For the solemn time is coming
When our tears for sin must flow.

"Therefore in our hymns, we pray Thee,
Grant us, Blessèd Trinity,

At the last to keep Thine Easter
In our Home beyond the sky,
There to Thee for ever singing
Alleluia joyfully." (82.)

Thought IV.

"For the glory of Thy Name."

Text.—"Save me, O God, for Thy name's sake" (Ps. liv. 1).

That is the test. Why do Christians—why do I pray that we may be delivered, or that we may bear what God has laid on us?

Not for ourselves, not that we may be happy, but that God may be glorified.

If I don't feel this now, if I feel I do want to be happy—to be set free from any trouble, or not to be troubled at all, I must not think that I am not a disciple. Do I put God first? or, rather, am I trying to put Him first? Then He will teach me in time to care for His glory—"the glory of Thy Name," that blessed name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that through us, through *me*, who am so unworthy, God may be glorified. That, because Christians are pure, are loving, the world may see a faint shadow of what God is.

Our blessed Lord revealed God to the world. He has left this task to us, His members, to reflect Him. This is why it is so worth while to bear troubles great and small rightly. Through them a Christian is brought to be more and more like Christ. As our Lord was made perfect through suffering so must His members be perfected by trials and sorrows, which come to all men, but which God teaches His children to use for His glory. I can see this in very small things. Two persons have the same disappoint-

ment. The weather spoils a pleasure excursion ; one grumbles and loses temper, the other takes even this as a lesson from God, and is bright and cheerful, and makes the best of things, and cheers up other people.

One sees Christians who brighten every one who comes near them. Why? Because they reflect Christ. This is glorifying God. It may be every now and then one's duty to have to try to win people who know nothing about God or His love. It is through the love of Christians, it is through the kindness and gentleness of some human being, they may come to see that God loves them.

Am I trying to live for God? Can any one see that my religion makes me gentler, purer, more truthful, more unselfish? If so, I am learning what glorifying God means, and He will teach me to care most of all for His glory.

" O generous love! that He, who smote
In Man for man the foe,
The double agony in Man
For man should undergo ;

' And in the Garden secretly,
And on the Cross on high,
Should teach His brethren, and inspire
To suffer and to die.

" Praise to the Holiest in the height,
And in the depth be praise :
In all His words most wonderful,
Most sure in all His ways." (172.)

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

The Collect.

O Lord God, Who seest that we put not our trust in any thing that we do; mercifully grant that by Thy power we may be defended against all adversity, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"O Lord God, Who seest that we put not our trust in any thing that we do."

Text.—"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me" (St. John xv. 4).

Nothing is so difficult for us to learn as this—this knowledge of our weakness.

When one begins really to want to serve God, it seems as if one could be so strong. Have I ever felt, after a very bright service, a stirring sermon, a sort of feeling that I should find it so easy to be good? What a mistake I find out I have made! But perhaps I don't feel very eager about being good, and I think I can keep myself from slipping into anything very bad, anything which would get me into trouble. If one goes in the state of mind of being quite pleased with oneself, one needs a sudden shock, a sharp reminder of one's sinfulness. If I feel that I don't realize—

take home to myself—how weak I am, how sinful, let me pray God to show me myself. But if one is turned to God, one needs constant reminders of one's weakness.

We all are apt to trust anything, anybody rather than God.

Do I ever trust to anything in my religion? Sometimes people let even holy things get between them and God. They think because they do a certain number of things they are all right. Now, it is not doing these outward things which helps me, but getting God's grace through these acts. Do I feel that Jesus Christ Himself comes to me in Holy Communion, and that He speaks to me in Bible reading, that He absolves me when I confess my sins, either alone or in the presence of His minister? I must remember always it is a living Saviour who will help me, and that it is He whom I must trust, not to any round of observances. What is it that takes away fear? Why do I know I am forgiven? Is it anything I do myself? No, of course not. It is God—God who forgives, God who gives me His grace, God who lives in me. He will teach me to know Him, to find Him.

Again, one must be quite sure one is not trusting to anything one does in the way of work. It is sometimes a temptation to people who have worked hard and done the best for themselves and their children, or perhaps their old parents, to feel rather pleased with themselves, and are not, even though they go to church and Communion, really aware they have done much amiss. People are sometimes very like the elder son in the parable of the Prodigal Son.

I must watch myself. I may be quite young, but if God in His love keeps me from great temptations, and if I do rather well in life, I may be tempted to trust to this—perhaps not in words, but in deeds. It is only when one has given oneself to Christ when one tries to ask Him, "Lord,

what wilt Thou have me to do?" that little by little one sees how one can trust to nothing but Him.

"Not for our sins alone
Thy mercy, Lord, we sue;
Let fall Thy pitying glance
On our devotions too,
What we have done for Thee,
And what we think to do.

"The holiest hours we spend
In prayer upon our knees,
The times when most we deem
Our songs of praise will please,
Thou Searcher of all hearts,
Forgiveness pour on these.

"And all the gifts we bring,
And all the vows we make,
And all the acts of love
We plan for Thy dear sake,
Into Thy pardoning thought,
O God of mercy, take.

"And most, when we, Thy flock,
Before Thine altar bend,
And strange, bewildering thoughts
With those sweet moments blend,
By Him Whose death we plead,
Good Lord, Thy help extend.

"Bow down Thine ear and hear!
Open Thine eyes and see!
Our very love is shame,
And we must come to Thee
To make it of Thy grace
What Thou wouldst have it be." (528.)

Thought II.

"Mercifully grant that by Thy power."

Text.—"And He hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. xii. 9).

God's power. In a certain way, I should, if I were asked, say, "God can do everything," but do I really believe it? I feel perhaps, or I may come to feel, dreadfully out of heart about myself. I can't overcome my sins. I have a bad temper, or I am tempted to drink, to gamble, to spend money on evil things, to yield to horrible sins; God would conquer in me and for me if only I would give myself to Him and do His commandments.

I don't give myself to Him because I don't half believe Him.

And again. People put God out of sight, and make plans, and continue in wickedness, and forget God. And these plans are overthrown, and then people are, as the Bible says, confounded, because God has been working out His purposes. I shall see this, if I try to study the Bible And it is so all through history.

How can I make this practical? Is there any thing which frightens me in my daily life? Sometimes things seem very much against us.

It is a great help sometimes to stay one's soul on the thought of God. There are terrible things in life sometimes. Wars, disturbances at home, attacks on religion. Behind all these is God. No one can fight against Him, and our Lord Jesus has told us, in words of infinite love and tenderness, how much God cares for us: the very hairs of our head are all numbered.

Let me treasure up these words for the time of trouble.

"Through all the changing scenes of life,
In trouble and in joy,
The praises of my God shall still
My heart and tongue employ.

"O magnify the Lord with me,
With me exalt His name;
When in distress to Him I called,
He to my rescue came.

"The hosts of God encamp around
The dwellings of the just;
Deliverance He affords to all
Who on His succour trust.

"O make but trial of His love,
Experience will decide
How blessed are they, and only they,
Who in His truth confide.

"Fear Him, ye saints, and you will then
Have nothing else to fear;
Make you His service your delight,
Your wants shall be His care.

"To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
The God Whom we adore,
Be glory, as it was, is now,
And shall be evermore." (290.)

Thought III.

"We may be defended against all adversity."

Text.—"He shall defend thee under His wings, and thou shalt be safe under His feathers" (Ps. xci. 4).

We ask God to defend us from things which are against us.

When once a Christian has given himself to God, has taken Jesus Christ for his own Saviour, the Holy Spirit for His guide, by degrees the most childlike spirit of trust comes into his soul.

Then he or she can really *pray* this week's Collect, and indeed all the other Collects, and go on, at work or at rest, in sickness or in health, resting in God. This is what may be mine, will be mine in time. And now, though I feel I do often fail, if I am trying to please Him, I can pray this prayer. Things that are against me, God knows best what they are, and sometimes what I think will harm me most is really for my best welfare.

But if there is something now in my daily life which seems against me, let me pray about it.

Is there something in my life? Do I feel pressure of want of enough money, enough leisure to improve myself, or to attend to my soul? Do I live in an overcrowded house, or work at an unhealthy trade?

All these things are adversities. Do I pray about them? If I do, it may be God will show me ways of deliverance. He may use my pain, my suffering, to raise other people to work at ways to deliver their brothers and sisters. God will not let His servant's pain be wasted.

Or is there some sorrow which threatens me? Do I love some one more than my life, and I see death coming near to break our sweet companionship? I may indeed feel that this is an adversity; but if I will put myself into God's hands, He will take all the hardness out of it. He will either take it away or teach me what He wills is best. It is the same with all the hard things of life.

If one brings them to God, He will teach us to bear them. Sometimes they are very hard because they are caused by our own foolishness. If my poverty is caused by my want of thrift, my sickness by my own bad habits, and so on, I

must feel often I have a heavy load to bear. But God will never let me have too much to bear. He will not let things be against me. He will turn them all into blessings to make me wholly and entirely His.

To-day, as I go to my work, is there anything which is an adversity? Lord Jesus, turn it into a cross; bear it in me as Thou didst bear it for me.

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
'Come unto Me and rest;
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down
Thy head upon My Breast:'
I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary and worn and sad;
I found in Him a resting-place,
And He has made me glad.

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
'Behold, I freely give
The living water, thirsty one,
Stoop down, and drink, and live:'
I came to Jesus, and I drank
Of that life-giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in Him.

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
'I am this dark world's Light:
Look unto Me, thy morn shall rise,
And all thy day be bright:'
I looked to Jesus, and I found
In Him my Star, my Sun,
And in that Light of life I'll walk
Till travelling days are done." (257.)

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

The Collect.

O Lord, Who hast taught us that all our doings without charity are nothing worth; send Thy Holy Ghost, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before Thee: grant this for Thine only Son Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Thought I.

"O Lord, Who hast taught us that all our doings without charity are nothing worth."

Text,—"If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries, and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing. Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil; rejoiceth not in unright-

EOUSNESS, BUT REJOICETH WITH THE TRUTH; BEARETH ALL THINGS, BELIEVETH ALL THINGS, HOPETH ALL THINGS, ENDURETH ALL THINGS. LOVE NEVER FAILETH: BUT WHETHER THERE BE PROPHECIES, THEY SHALL BE DONE AWAY; WHETHER THERE BE TONGUES, THEY SHALL CEASE; WHETHER THERE BE KNOWLEDGE, IT SHALL BE DONE AWAY" (1 Cor. xiii. 1–8, Revised Version).

Charity—that is love. That is what God asks. That is what is to be the reason of all one does.

Has love a place in my life? Why do I keep Lent? or, indeed, why do I go to any religious service? Is it to please God?

Is there love in my life? It is not difficult, if one is in earnest, to find out. I need only read this week's Epistle. Do I bear, suffer? Am I kind, or am I jealous—put out if others are praised or noticed? Do I put myself forward, boast of my doings, my belongings? Am I always seemly in speech and conduct, not vexing gentler and better-mannered people by roughness, what is known as "larking"? Do I always think of myself—what is best for me, not at all of other people's bodies and souls? If I have any one under me, do I care at all for his or her health, pleasure, or religion? Do I rejoice in iniquity? that is, do I take delight in hearing and repeating evil gossip? Do I try to believe the best of people? What a good thing it would be if this Lent I set myself to see by the light of this Epistle, in what way I treat this great law of love! The hymn at the end of this Thought will help me also. Do I really take home to myself that no amount of respectability, and church-going, and "keeping myself to myself," will be any good if I break this law of God?

If I am only just beginning to try to please God, and trying to turn to Him, I must not be discouraged by feeling I

have so little love to Him. Let me try to make my life just a little more loving. Little by little He will lead me.

If, on the other hand, I am a communicant, and therefore, it is to be hoped, a real Christian, let me ask myself, on my knees, am I living the life of love? God will show me if I ask Him where I fail.

The Holy Spirit will in this great Epistle help me to enlighten my conscience to find out what is wrong.

"Gracious Spirit, Holy Ghost,
Taught by Thee, we covet most
Of Thy gifts at Pentecost,
Holy, heavenly love.

"Love is kind, and suffers long,
Love is meek, and thinks no wrong,
Love than death itself more strong;
Therefore give us love.

"Prophecy will fade away,
Melting in the light of day;
Love will ever with us stay;
Therefore give us love.

"Faith will vanish into sight;
Hope be emptied in delight;
Love in heaven will shine more bright;
Therefore give us love.

"Faith and hope and love we see,
Joining hand in hand, agree;
But the greatest of the three,
And the best, is love.

"From the overshadowing
Of Thy gold and silver wing
Shed on us, who to Thee sing,
Holy, heavenly love." (210.)

Thought II.

"Send Thy Holy Ghost, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before Thee: grant this for Thine only Son Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Text.—"But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor. xiii. 13).

I must never forget to ask the help of God's Holy Spirit. He it is Who will give me all the fruits of the Spirit, and this greatest fruit, love.

"Most excellent gift." Why is love the greatest?

Because it is God's own special attribute. That which belongs to Him. "God is love." We cannot think of God as having faith and hope, but He is love. And, whenever I see unselfish love in any one, such love as leads a mother to sacrifice herself for her child, the love which leads a man to give his life for his friend, I may feel sure that these are shadows, far-off reflections of the love of God.

If earthly parents or friends love so much, what can I not expect from the love of God?

And, therefore, whenever I see a loving deed, I may thank God and take courage. People who are unselfishly loving their neighbours are not far from Him Who is love.

Then faith and hope will not exist in heaven, as I read in hymn 210, but love will be for ever. We shall love God, we shall know God.

Surely it is terrible to lead an unloving life. Nothing can make us so unready for heaven. If we are hard and cold to our nearest here, how shall we bear to be in heaven where all is love?

And this will lead me to see how sins against purity break this law of love. We lead others into sin. How can we dare to hurt the souls and bodies of those for whom Jesus died?

No one can lead the life of love who is not guarding his soul and body.

All who are ruling themselves by such a law as is given us in this week's Epistle will find themselves growing in the love of God.

Love unites all graces. "As every lovely hue is light, so every grace is love," and a soul without love is dead, Think if God looks on me, and sees me, it may be, leading a quite respectable life, and possibly going to church, even Communion, and yet leading a life of selfishness, of caring only for myself, perhaps a life in which there is a constant keeping up of grudges against my neighbours, perhaps refusing to be on speaking terms with some one—in what state is my soul? Dead. I may listen to sermons, I may hear of God's love, and yet be perfectly dead. God can give me life, can restore my life, if I ask Him, if I will pray to Him to make me repent.

And if I feel, on the other hand, that I am trying ever so little to do kind things for His sake, if I try to please Him, it may be, by taking time to say my prayers, He will lead me on; He will pour His love more and more into my soul.

"Faith, hope, and love here weave one chain;
But love alone shall then remain
When this short day is gone:
O Love, O Truth, O endless Light,
When shall we see thy Sabbath bright
With all our labours done?" (262.)

ASH WEDNESDAY

The Collect.

Almighty and everlasting God, Who hatest nothing that Thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent; create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of Thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"Almighty God, Who hatest nothing that Thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent."

Text.—"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 St. John i. 7).

I can never take home to myself too much that God loves *me*. I may see that there are in my soul dreadful stains; I may look round on the people among whom I live, and think how very little there is of goodness in them, and yet God loves them. God is so good, He wants to make each soul—my soul—happy, fit for Him. But He *cannot* save us *in* our sins. He will save us *from* our sins if we will let

Him. Do I want to be saved from my sins? What I must do, then, is to bring them all to the foot of the Cross. I must kneel down and confess them one by one to God. And every one of us has to come back and confess that though we have been trying, yet we have failed, and we must be forgiven. And God does forgive, He does pour the precious Blood on our soul, He does look on us only as in Christ. But it is very hard for us, for me, if I have been careless, falling into great sins of impurity, or yielding to the temptations of drink, or if I have been revengeful, or yielded to any mortal sin, to repent.

God does in His mercy give us great helps. I can go to one of His ministers, and tell out my sins one by one, and hear the message of forgiveness. It is a very *humble* way of confessing our sins; and then, if we will only throw ourselves on His mercy, God will forgive. Many Christians who are trying to please God find the gift of absolution is a most real help. And no one who is trying to turn to God after some great sin, or even on conversion to God from a careless life, should hesitate to ask the help of a clergyman. It may be easier at first to speak to a teacher or friend, but one must remember the minister of God is there, sent by God to help us, to pray with us, to tell us how we had better order our lives, to give us God's message of forgiveness.

Do I want to be penitent? Do I think I have anything for which to be really sorry? If I do not, the first prayer I should pray is that He will open the eyes of my soul to see my sin and my Lord.

"Oh! come to the merciful Saviour Who calls you,
Oh! come to the Lord Who forgives and forgets;
Though dark be the fortune on earth that befalls you,
There's a bright home above, where the sun never sets.

"Oh! come then to Jesus, Whose Arms are extended
To fold His dear children in closest embrace;
Oh! come, for your exile will shortly be ended,
And Jesus will show you His beautiful Face.

"Yes, come to the Saviour, Whose mercy grows brighter
The longer you look at the depth of His love;
And fear not! 'tis Jesus! and life's cares grow lighter
As you think of the Home and the Glory above.

"Have you sinned as none else in the world have before you?
Are you blacker than all other creatures in guilt?
Oh, fear not, and doubt not! the mother who bore you
Loves you less than the Saviour Whose Blood you have spilt.

"Come, come to His Feet, and lay open your story
Of suffering and sorrow, of guilt and of shame;
For the pardon of sin is the crown of His glory,
And the joy of our Lord to be true to His Name."
(637.)

Thought II.

"Create and make in us new and contrite hearts."

Text.—"Make me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. A broken and contrite heart, O God, shalt Thou not despise" (Ps. li. 10, 17).

Do I take home to myself the thought that sorrow for sin—penitence—is a life-long work?

Our heart, the heart renewed by the Holy Spirit, is to be contrite, worn by penitence, always.

It is not to be that just once in our lives we feel sorry and turn to God; no, we are to go on, growing in sorrow for

our sins, and growing to know more of our sins. A person who turns to God after a life of sin or carelessness has not nearly so tender a conscience as, please God, he will get in time, as Jesus takes possession of him.

It is one of the most beautiful things in the world to see a child, fresh and joyous, also endued with a tender conscience. And if that child's spiritual life is allowed to grow, he will go on, with that precious gift of God, a tender conscience, growing too, so that he will never wander away very far from God; and he will grow in the sense of how much he needs Jesus, in sorrow for grieving Jesus. Do I pray this prayer, "Make me a clean heart, O God"? Do I want to grow in sorrow for my sins? As I grow in the sense of sorrow for my sins I shall grow also in the sense of the great love "of my Master, and only Saviour, Jesus Christ"; I shall grow in the sense of my own weakness and nothingness, and of how unfit I am to judge others. I shall grow in love for others, because I know that He Who loves me loves them; and I shall grow in joy. Yes, it is one of the strange contradictions of the Christian life that sorrow for sin lives side by side with joy. To be forgiven, to live constantly in Jesus' presence, to be able to come to Him in every trouble, after one's sad falls, to offer Him every joy, is to begin, ever so little, the joy of heaven.

"O for a heart to praise my God,
A heart from sin set free!
A heart that's sprinkled with the Blood
So freely shed for me:

"A heart resigned, submissive, meek,
My great Redeemer's Throne;
Where only Christ is heard to speak,
Where Jesus reigns alone:

"A humble, lowly, contrite heart,
Believing, true, and clean,
Which neither life nor death can part
From Him that dwells within:

"A heart in every thought renewed,
And full of love Divine;
Perfect, and right, and pure, and good,
A copy, Lord, of Thine.

"Thy nature, gracious Lord, impart;
Come quickly from above;
Write Thy new Name upon my heart,
Thy new best Name of Love." (549.)

THOUGHT III.

"That we worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of Thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Texts. — "IN WHOM WE HAVE OUR REDEMPTION THROUGH HIS BLOOD, THE FORGIVENESS OF OUR TRESPASSES" (Eph. i. 7).

"I WRITE UNTO YOU, LITTLE CHILDREN, BECAUSE YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN YOU FOR HIS NAME'S SAKE" (1 St. John ii. 12).

We pray that we may have a right sense of our sins, that we may not think lightly of them. People who do not commit sins which get them into trouble are very apt to think very, very little of sins which the Bible puts on a level with offences which bring the weight of the law or the bad opinion of the world on those who commit them. And this Collect, like the rest of the Collects, is meant to be prayed by Christians. Do I feel how dreadful sins of tem-

per, sins of the tongue, sins of sloth, self-indulgence, are in a Christian? But, on the other hand, God will give us a real forgiveness if we ask Him for the sake of Jesus.

He really does blot out our sins, so that if I am trying to please Him, and I am trying to leave off my sins, I may be sure He has forgiven.

Remission. We ask to be let off the penalty. What is the penalty of unforgiven sin? Separation from God here and in the life to come. But we do not pray to be let off punishment. God may punish us; and this holy season leads us to punish ourselves. Not because anything we *do* can buy our forgiveness, but because to be a little strict and stern with oneself helps one to grow in horror of sin. And punishment of sin may be blessed if only it is prayed over. Ill-health that has come through wicked self-indulgence in drink and sin, loss of affection through ill-temper, loss of money through careless extravagance—all these, if one prays over them, will bring forth fruit. Let me read the Ash Wednesday second lesson for the evening again—Hebrews xii. 3–13. But all sorrow and disappointment, and daily trials and worries, can be borne in this way. God is punishing us, not always because of some sin, but because He wants to make us His, to give us perfect forgiveness—seeing us only as in Jesus Christ.

O merciful Lord, grant to me real sorrow for my sins, a real purpose to give them up; and grant me Thy grace of pardon, Thy power to live the life of a Christian.

"When, wounded sore, the stricken heart,
Lies bleeding and unbound,
One only Hand, a pierced Hand,
Can salve the sinner's wound.

"When sorrow swells the laden breast,
And tears of anguish flow,

One only Heart, a broken Heart,
Can feel the sinner's woe.

"When penitential grief has wept
Over some foul dark spot,
One only Stream, a Stream of Blood,
Can wash away the blot.

"'Tis Jesus' Blood that washes white,
His Hand that brings relief;
His Heart is touch'd with all our joys
And feels for all our grief.

"Lift up Thy bleeding Hand, O Lord,
Unseal that cleansing Tide;
We have no shelter from our sin
But in Thy wounded Side." (183.)

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

The Collect.

O Lord, Who for our sake didst fast forty days and forty nights ; give us grace to use such abstinence, that, our flesh being subdued to the Spirit, we may ever obey Thy godly motions in righteousness and true holiness, to Thy honour and glory, Who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

Thought I.

"O Lord, Who for our sake didst fast forty days and forty nights."

Text.—"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward an hungred" (S. Matt. iv. 1, 2).

"For our sake." Do I really understand that it was for us, yes, for *me*, that Jesus fasted ? Perhaps I feel as if this Collect, and, indeed, the whole season of Lent, had very little to do with me. Yet it has. The Lord goes into the wilderness filled with the Holy Spirit to bear the burden of His human body—hunger. He will know by experience what it means to be hungry, thirsty, tired, and in that condition to meet temptation. Let me never forget that our Lord met all this in His human nature. The very first

temptation was to use His power as God to satisfy His human needs. Do I know what it is to be tired out, possibly worn out, by not having enough food? do I think I can't possibly resist any temptations which come to me when I am in that state? Jesus Christ knows how I feel; He will help me. Then I must think again. The Lord begins His ministry with this long retirement. Do I really try to get any quiet time? Would I give up, say, an evening's pleasure to be quite alone with God? If I am able to please myself as to the spending of my days, do I ever try to get away alone with God, to go to a retreat, or a quiet day? But there are ways in which God seems to lead Christ's followers into a wilderness.

Sometimes, after a very special time of blessing, we seem to be brought into a "wilderness of pain," it may be of bodily pain, when we have to lie on a bed of agony and be a great deal alone. Or God may lead some of His dearest children into a wilderness of great sorrow and loneliness.

And these times may bring to us, as they brought to Jesus, great temptations. If such sad times are sent to me, let me remember that Jesus has been in the wilderness too, tempted of the devil. Yes, if either I myself, or some friend whom I love, is in a sad wilderness, and it seems all darkness, and prayers don't seem to be heard, and evil doubts of God's goodness, nay, doubts if there be a God at all, assail the soul, what is to be done? Fling oneself on Christ. He knows exactly how one feels. These temptations are not sins. If only we will pray, and strive to do and to bear, the wilderness will turn into the garden of the Lord, where angels come and minister to us, as they did to Jesus. We shall eat angels' food, for we shall be fed with bread from heaven.

"Forty days and forty nights
Thou wast fasting in the wild;

Forty days and forty nights
Tempted, and yet undefiled.

"Sunbeams scorching all the day;
Chilly dewdrops nightly shed;
Prowling beasts about Thy way;
Stones Thy pillow; earth Thy bed.

"Shall not we Thy sorrow share,
And from earthly joys abstain,
Fasting with unceasing prayer,
Glad with Thee to suffer pain?

"And if Satan, vexing sore,
Flesh or spirit should assail,
Thou, his Vanquisher before,
Grant we may not faint nor fail.

"So shall we have peace Divine;
Holier gladness ours shall be;
Round us too shall angels shine,
Such as minister'd to Thee.

"Keep, O keep us, Saviour dear,
Ever constant by Thy Side;
That with Thee we may appear
At th' eternal Eastertide." (92.)

THOUGHT II.

"Give us grace to use such abstinence."

Text.—"I BUFFET MY BODY, AND BRING IT INTO BONDAGE" (1 Cor. ix. 27).

"Abstinence"—giving up something that I like, some bodily indulgence, in order that my body may be my servant, not my master. For instance, what can be more terrible (to take an extreme case) than to be the slave of drink? Now,

although complete abstinence from strong drink is often best, yet it is not wrong for persons who need it to take wine or beer. Yet it is very needful to watch and see that the liking for such things is in no way mastering us. The test is, can we go without? So it is with all self-indulgences—sweets, tobacco, habits of lying late in bed, pleasures, such as novel reading, or dancing, or theatre going. We must not be the slave of any such habits or indulgences.

That is why going without some extra indulgence in food or pleasure in Lent and on Fridays is a real help. Unless one has a set time and a fixed rule, one is almost certain to let such small, or seemingly small, self-denials slip away. *The being able to do without*—(that is to be one's aim about all luxuries, all bits of self-indulgence)—is a great help to goodness.

Then, if one gives up some trifle, so small one is almost ashamed to mention it—sugar, butter, or what not, one can save something for Christ's work. And if one's life is rather comfortable, with plenty to eat and drink, and many small comforts, it is terribly easy for even men or women who have to earn their living to grow very selfish, very much set on things for their bodies, on overmuch care for eating.

From all this, which does destroy the life of God, a little sternness, a little obedience to the Church's rules, would save many a one in the beginning.

Am I a slave to any habit? Do I care overmuch for excitement? Do I hate nothing so much as being dull? That is another bit of self-indulgence which Lent will help me to fight. Let me ask God to show me how best to use abstinence.

"By precepts taught of ages past,
Now let us keep again the fast
Which, year by year, in order meet
Of forty days is made complete.

"The law and seers that were of old
In divers ways this Lent foretold,
Which Christ Himself, the Lord and Guide
Of every season, sanctified.

"More sparing, therefore, let us make
The words we speak, the food we take,
Deny ourselves in mirth and sleep,
In stricter watch our senses keep." (85.)

Thought III.

"That our flesh being subdued to the Spirit."

Text.—"For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit" (Rom. viii. 5).

This is the object of giving up: that the spirit, the mind, the soul, the nobler part of us, may be that which rules us, being itself ruled by the Holy Spirit. For one cannot listen to the Holy Spirit, one cannot obey His motions, His movements in the soul, if we are slaves to the wishes of our bodily appetites. Those who yield to awful sins of impurity do prevent themselves utterly from attending to the voice of God; they drive the Holy Spirit away.

But small sins, as people call them, love of money, of pleasure, deaden one's love for holy things. It is so comfortable to lie in bed in the mornings, one cannot think of getting up in time to go to early Communion. One could not possibly put a meal a little earlier or later, or eat less food once in a way, in order to allow people who wait on us (or to allow ourselves) time to go to Church. One must have all sorts of little extras in the way of food. All these

things are like tiny threads; but if you cling long enough to tiny threads, you can bind a strong man; and these self-indulgences are like chains which bind us round and round. If one sets oneself to please God, on the contrary, one finds perfect freedom. There are so many seeming contradictions in Christ's service. *Paradoxes* they are called.

Keeping Lent seems as if it were a bit of hard bondage, a sort of slavery, and yet these little petty self-denials, cutting off a pleasure here and a bit of self-indulgence there, going without something one likes, they are training the body to be the servant of the soul, if they are done for Christ's sake, not because one thinks one is doing something good in itself. Ah, no; it is because the body has to be kept under, it is as a remedy against sin, one does these things, in God's sight, to Him only, unseen by man.

What is it in which God would have me deny myself this Lent? Something there *must* be. Is it in food, drink, pleasure? in talk perhaps? He will show me if I ask Him.

Then by degrees I shall find I am able to care more for the things of the soul. My flesh, my body, is kept under. I am, by God's mercy, not a slave to any bodily indulgence.

"Christian, dost thou see them
On the holy ground?
How the troops of Midian
Prowl and prowl around?
Christian, up and smite them,
Counting gain but loss;
Smite them by the virtue
Of the holy Cross.

"Christian, dost thou feel them,
How they work within,

Striving, tempting, luring,
Goading into sin?
Christian, never tremble;
Never be downcast;
Smite them by the virtue
Of the Lenten fast.

"Christian, dost thou hear them,
How they speak thee fair?
'Always fast and vigil?
Always watch and prayer?'
Christian, answer boldly,
'While I breathe I pray':
Peace shall follow battle,
Night shall end in day.

"Well I know thy trouble,
O My servant true;
Thou art very weary,—
I was weary too;
But that toil shall make thee
Some day all Mine own,
And the end of sorrow
Shall be near My Throne." (91.)

Thought IV.

"We may ever obey Thy godly motions in righteousness and true holiness, to Thy honour and glory, Who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end."

Text.—"As He which called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living" (1 St. Peter i. 15).

True righteousness and holiness. Yes, that is, after all, what Lent is meant for, what the Church exists for, what God gives us grace for—to make holy men and women.

Perhaps righteousness here means outward acts, and holiness the deep inward condition of a consecrated—set-apart—life. God is to be the aim of one's life. Have I any wish to put God first? Then the keeping of Lent, the little rules, the little bits of strictness, are parts of one great plan: to please God—to become one with Him.

Now do not let me be frightened. This is a very high aim. St. Paul and St. John had it; but so may a child who simply leads a bright, dutiful life, growing in love. And I—I am perhaps poor, or hard-worked, or ignorant; I am, at any rate, very imperfect. Yet He has called me to be set apart for Him. The whole life of grace in His Church is to help me to grow in this life. The only question is, do I want to put God first in my life? Then what help I may find in Lent! what teaching about what is really so important—the stern side of a Christian life, the need to do to death all the evil wishes of the body! Lent will lead me to Passiontide; and it is only by entering into the Passion of our Lord that one can enter into Easter joy. If I want—ah, yes, do I? Am I converted? That is, is my will bound to God?

If I am not converted, I must not think that little bits of extra church-going, or something which costs me nothing to give up, and then utter neglect of holy things after Easter, can help me. Yet a very imperfect beginning to keep Lent, a wish to be better, is always something, and from those beginnings may come great things. Only, the one end of all Lent is to deepen our sorrow for sin, to deepen our love, to deepen our whole life. Lord, I am utterly sinful, and I do not know even if I want to be better, but Thou canst draw me. Make me want to be wholly Thine.

Make me hate my sins. Make me long after goodness, long for Thee.

Please God, Easter shall find me a better Christian than I was at the beginning of Lent.

If only I will pray, God will show me, God will lead me by the Holy Spirit to true righteousness.

Let me try to get a quiet time every now and then, perhaps in church. That is why it is good to give up such things as dancing and novel reading in Lent. One can find quiet times to be alone with God, as our Lord was alone in the desert. It is when we are quiet and alone, even for five minutes, that we feel the movement of the Holy Spirit. Then He stirs up our wills to righteous acts. We see something we could give up during Lent. We see some little bits of kindness we could do for a neighbour. We see some fault for which we must ask pardon of God, and perhaps of our neighbour. And in His mercy God builds up in us the character He wishes to build. These outward acts form habits, and habits form principles, and principles form character.

"Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
One in Three, and Three in One,
As by the celestial host,
Let Thy will on earth be done;
Praise by all to Thee be given,
Glorious Lord of earth and heaven.

"If a sinner such as I
May to Thy great glory live,
All my actions sanctify,
All my words and thoughts receive;
Claim me for Thy service, claim
All I have, and all I am.

"Take my soul and body's powers;
Take my memory, mind, and will,
All my goods, and all my hours,
All I know and all I feel,
All I think, or speak, or do;
Take my heart—but make it new!" (636.)

THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

The Collect.

Almighty God, Who seest that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves; keep us both outwardly in our bodies, and inwardly in our souls; that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"Almighty God, Who seest that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves."

Text.—"Apart from me ye can do nothing" (St. John xv. 5).

It is one of the great lessons which are only learned in Christ's school, that we are very weak; that we cannot help ourselves. It is only, perhaps, by degrees that one comes to learn it.

Very often a boy or girl feels full of strength of body and soul — well, joyous, untried, sure that certain sins can never tempt them, that they are strong enough to battle their own way. Very soon the sad lesson of weakness is learned, the awful strength of temptation, the pitiable weakness of their own nature. Sometimes it is only when a

strong man is laid low by illness that he really owns how weak his moral nature has been too.

This Collect is a prayer for us who do know how helpless we are. God knows it too. Do I ever feel how weak I am? Do I get frightened by the evil that I see all around me? Do I feel that my temptations are really too strong?

It is all very well for people who have nice homes, and plenty of quiet time, and lots of money, but for me it is impossible to keep steady, or pure, or to make time for God.

Let me stop a moment. God knows. He will never (He has promised this) let any temptation be too strong. Do I take this home to myself? God cares that I should conquer. He loves me. He wants me to get the better of these temptations; He knows all about them. Do I ever kneel down and tell Him about these temptations? Not just saying a general sort of prayer, but telling Him all my trouble as I would tell a very good, wise friend. Perhaps if I try to do this more and more, I shall grow to find out a little of what prayer is, a little of what the love of God is. I shall find out what help He does send. And let me try this Lent to learn more about prayer. Lent is a great time for learning about prayer. In this, as in everything else, I can throw myself on my knees and say, "Thou knowest I have no power of myself to help myself to pray. Lord teach me to pray."

"Other refuge have I none;
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee;
Leave, ah! leave me not alone,
Still support and comfort me.
All my trust on Thee is stayed,
All my help from Thee I bring;
Cover my defenceless head
With the shadow of Thy wing." (193.)

Thought II.

"Keep us both outwardly in our bodies, and inwardly in our souls."

Text.—"Whoso dwelleth under the defence of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (Ps. xci. 1).

This is putting ourselves into God's hands.

He will keep us safe in body and soul.

More and more one must try, if one is a Christian at all, to live in a state of trusting in God.

This does not mean not using all the means He has given us for keeping ourselves in health of body and soul.

Rather, as I by degrees learn more and more of the laws of health, of how important fresh air, attention to drains, cleanliness, proper food, are, the more I shall feel that these are His rules, that it is flat disobedience to Him to live in dirt, to shut out fresh air, to go unwashed. More and more I shall feel, if I am taught by His Holy Spirit, how wonderful and holy the human body is. More and more I shall grow, if God keeps me outwardly in my body, to hate sin, to feel that all kinds of fleshly lusts are detestable.

And my soul—God will keep that too. Again, I can put myself quite simply into His hands. He will not let evil come to it. But if I want Him to keep my soul, I must obey God's laws for my inner life. That life wants food, support, cleansing as much as my body does. It is no use my saying God will keep my soul if I use none of the ways He has appointed—if I neglect all this inner life. But if I am trying to do what He commands, if I want to be kept by Him, again I need not be frightened because I have so many temptations and so few helps. Perhaps I can very seldom

come to the Holy Communion, perhaps I can only give a very few moments to my prayers every night and morning, perhaps my Sundays are working days. I must not be cast down. Again, I can tell God all about these things. He will make these few moments as precious as if they were hours. He will show me how to make more time by using spare minutes. He will make my Communions most precious. He will *keep* my soul, so that if I have to bear evil, it will not hurt me.

"O spread Thy covering wings around,
Till all our wanderings cease,
And at our Father's loved abode
Our souls arrive in peace." (512.)

Thought III.

"That we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body."

Texts.—"I WILL SAY UNTO THE LORD, THOU ART MY HOPE, AND MY STRONG HOLD: MY GOD; IN HIM WILL I TRUST.

"FOR HE SHALL DELIVER THEE FROM THE SNARE OF THE HUNTER, AND FROM THE NOISOME PESTILENCE.

"HE SHALL DEFEND THEE UNDER HIS WINGS, AND THOU SHALT BE SAFE UNDER HIS FEATHERS: HIS FAITHFULNESS AND TRUTH SHALL BE THY SHIELD AND BUCKLER.

"THOU SHALT NOT BE AFRAID FOR ANY TERROR BY NIGHT; NOR FOR THE ARROW THAT FLIETH BY DAY;

"FOR THE PESTILENCE THAT WALKETH IN DARKNESS; NOR FOR THE SICKNESS THAT DESTROYETH IN THE NOONDAY" (Ps. xci. 2–6).

These verses are taken from a Psalm which is said in the

last Office for the day, called Compline. Many people say it just before going to bed ; for, besides the morning and evening services, there are seven offices for certain times in the day. People who have given themselves to the special service of God—Sisters of Mercy, Cowley Fathers, and many others, even people living in the world—say all or some of these. There is a very good book called the *Treasury of Devotion*, which has the four Offices which people, especially people who also attend Morning and Evening Prayer, oftenest say.

I may come across these, so it is well to be lucid about them. This Psalm, the 91st, is most beautiful to say at night, or in any time of danger.

It tells us how God guards His servants—our bodies. We pray God to keep us. Some of us are in danger from the nature of our work, and we all need His care. Do I ever go to church when the Litany is being said? It is well to do so, for it is the great prayer for others. These are the adversities against which the Litany prays :

"From lightning and tempest ; from plague, pestilence, and famine ; from battle and murder, and from sudden death,

Good Lord, deliver us."

We do pray that we may be kept from these things, and it is right ; for apart from the misery they cause, these dreadful things are dreadful things to faith, to patience. And, therefore, if I am frightened about some sickness, or about my work hurting me, or if I have some special nervous dread of my own, I may, nay I must, lay it all before God—tell Him exactly how badly I feel, say these verses over and over again ; and if some very hard thing does happen—some accident, some sickness, even some terrible event caused by the sins of others, still God will not let

these things hurt my soul. Out of them He will bring blessing.

Only it is right to pray against them, and one is sure God does hear our prayers—does protect us. As one looks back, one sees that one has been guarded. Have I any trust in Him? Let me, before I finish this meditation, kneel and ask Him to teach me to trust Him.

"He that hath God his Guardian made
Shall under the Almighty's shade
Secure and undisturbed abide.
Thus to my soul of Him I'll say,
He is my Fortress and my Stay,
My God, in Whom I will confide."
(*Tate and Brady, metrical version of Ps. xci.*)

Thought IV.

"And from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul."

Texts.—"For from within, out of the heart of men, evil thoughts proceed" (St. Mark vii. 21).

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (St. Matt. v. 8).

Do I wonder at all that the Collect puts evil *thoughts* as the special evil to be prayed against? If I had been making a prayer, perhaps I should have prayed against evil deeds. These texts will help me to understand how needful, how very important, above all things, it is to keep the heart clean.

Our Lord tells us how an evil heart gives rise to evil deeds. He gives a terrible list of sins. And He also tells us in the other text of the blessing which will be given to the pure—the sight of God. So this is to be my prayer. Is

my heart given to God? Do I want Him to dwell there? If so, then He will, by His Holy Spirit, cleanse me, guard me from evil, and I must work with Him. There are books, there are people, there are amusements, which do suggest evil thoughts. So much as in me lies I must avoid these things. Do I? Do I like to read about wicked things in newspapers? If at all I am trying ever so little to serve Christ, I must pray and try to keep that inward life pure. Have I come to Him and known what it is to be forgiven? Am I being cleansed by His holy body and His most precious blood? Then I must pray more and more that He will guard my soul from wickedness; and the ways of guarding are by prayer, Bible reading, Holy Communion, and care in what I think about, read about, talk about. And the best way to be on my watch against evil thoughts is to be full of good thoughts.

Evil thoughts are of many kinds.

There are thoughts of despair, thinking that one cannot lead a Christian life, or that God is not good.

Or there may be thoughts of discontent about one's lot in life.

Or thoughts about evil, about sins of which it is a shame to speak.

Or unkind thoughts about others, or idle plans about what one would do if one were rich, beautiful, clever. Or thoughts about one's own good deeds, or one's good looks; and many more.

If we pray *at once*, God will hear our prayer.

Do I really *see* how dangerous the assaults of evil thoughts are? O Lord, teach me to see!

"Love Divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of Heaven, to earth come down,
Fix in us Thy humble dwelling,
All Thy faithful mercies crown.

"Jesu, Thou art all compassion,
Pure unbounded love Thou art;
Visit us with Thy salvation,
Enter every trembling heart.

"Come, Almighty, to deliver,
Let us all Thy grace receive;
Suddenly return, and never,
Never more Thy temples leave.

"Thee we would be always blessing,
Serve Thee as Thy hosts above;
Pray, and praise Thee, without ceasing,
Glory in Thy perfect love.

"Finish then Thy new creation,
Pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see Thy great salvation
Perfectly restored in Thee.

"Changed from glory into glory,
Till in Heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before Thee,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise." (520.)

THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

The Collect.

We beseech Thee, Almighty God, look upon the hearty desires of Thy humble servants, and stretch forth the right hand of Thy Majesty to be our defence against all our enemies; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"We beseech Thee, Almighty God, look upon the hearty desires of Thy humble servants."

Text.—"Hear my prayer, O Lord, and consider my desire; hearken unto me for Thy truth and righteousness' sake" (Ps. cxliii. 1).

"The hearty desires." That means what we really wish. Like all the other Collects, this one is meant to be prayed by people who are turned to God, who are Christians.

And a Christian prays as Jesus Christ would have him pray; that is to say, in agreement with our Lord. Little by little the Holy Ghost teaches each Christian to *pray*. It is a great blessing at times, especially in Lent, to think about one's prayers.

Do I bring to God my "hearty desires"? and are they such as God can bless—can look upon? What do I wish most? There are wishes which one feels one cannot pray about; one may be sure such wishes are wrong, whether they are for more money, or that one may get to be in a better position, or that one may be able to pay some one else out. No; people have this sort of desires, but they

are not the desires God looks on. But as one is taught by the Holy Spirit, one learns to pray as our Lord teaches one in the Lord's Prayer. One does get to *desire* that God will rule us and every one, that His will may be done in us and by us, that He will give us the things we need for our souls and our bodies, that He will keep us from evil. Does this seem hard to learn? God will teach me if I *really* wish it. The wish to pray is a wish He will "look upon"; one may bring Him all one's desires. I may wish very much for many things—for safety for those I love, for success in my work, for the power to have a nice holiday, or I may be frightened about some danger or some bit of difficult work. I can bring these desires all to God and ask Him to look upon them, and, if they are good, to grant them.

To pray this prayer rightly, to pray any prayer rightly, there must be the beginning in my heart of trust in God, the habit of looking on God as my Father, Who does care that I should have what is best for me, and that those I love should have what is best for them. Only, God knows what is best, and I do not.

"Keep us in the narrow way,
Warn us when we go astray,
Plead within us when we pray;
Hear us, Holy Spirit." (470.)

Thought II.

"And stretch forth the right hand of Thy Majesty."

Text.—"The King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable" (1 Tim. vi. 15, 16).

God is all-powerful, and therefore the Holy Scriptures speak of His right hand, meaning His great power. "Thy Majesty." Words so feebly express what one tries to mean

when one speaks of God. It is good for me at times to lift my heart up to God, to try and think that God, Who made all things, is "my Father." I may, nay, I ought to, stay my soul on this great Rock. Behind all the din, all the weariness, all the storms of this world, God is.

Surely, too, this thought of God, Who cannot be deceived, Who is slowly, surely working out His purposes, will make me reverent, will help me to obey His laws. Do I ever think why actions are right or wrong? Let me think over what a holy man has written [1]—that "morality" (that means, right way of life) "is a *real* thing, . . . that 'right' and 'wrong' are infinitely more important than we ordinarily feel; that they are eternal distinctions which belong to the very nature of God Himself." And to think of God as all-powerful and all-holy will help me; for, as another teacher has pointed out, it is very important what sort of thoughts people have about God. I need only read about heathen nations to see what effect bad, low thoughts of God have had on them.

If the thought of a holy God is present in the mind of a nation as a whole, or in the mind of a person, the life of the nation, of the person, will be altered. People have often such terribly mistaken ideas about God. Sometimes one hears it said that God is so merciful, it will be all right with so-and-so, although that so-and-so has led a drunken or impure life, or has set his heart wholly on money and given God no place in his life. God is merciful, but He is just and He is holy. I cannot think too much of that awful holiness, of that righteous majesty; there are sins which do shut out the soul from ever seeing that vision of the majesty of God for which the redeemed long.

And there are many other wrong ideas about God which prayer, Bible-reading, Communion drive away. The thought

[1] Fr. Congreve's *Christian Life a Response*, p. 44.

for to-day is surely how great, how holy God is. What does He ask of me?

"My God, how wonderful Thou art,
Thy majesty how bright,
How beautiful Thy mercy-seat,
In depths of burning light!

"How dread are Thine eternal years,
O everlasting Lord,
By prostrate spirits day and night
Incessantly adored!

"How wonderful, how beautiful
The sight of Thee must be,
Thine endless wisdom, boundless power,
And awful purity!

"Oh, how I fear Thee, Living God,
With deepest, tenderest fears,
And worship Thee with trembling hope
And penitential tears!

"Yet I may love Thee too, O Lord,
Almighty as Thou art,
For Thou hast stooped to ask of me
The love of my poor heart.

"No earthly father loves like Thee,
No mother e'er so mild,
Bears and forbears, as Thou hast done
With me, Thy sinful child.

"Father of Jesus, love's reward,
What rapture will it be,
Prostrate before Thy Throne to lie,
And gaze and gaze on Thee." (169.)

Thought III.

"To be our defence against all our enemies."

Text.—"The Lord Himself is thy Keeper: the Lord is thy defence upon thy right hand" (Ps. cxxi. 5).

Yesterday I thought of God's majesty, of all that is meant by God—Holiness, Power, Goodness.

God is Light,
God is Love,
God is Spirit,

as a great writer says, commenting on St. John's first Epistle.[1]

And to-day let me think this great God cares for His Church, for each member of that Church. Do I feel this loving, protecting care of God is a real fact—for the Church first? Yes, God is behind all the clouds. People may attack the faith, people may fight against light; God is there ready to stretch forth His power. And so for each member. Am I afraid? Do I need defence against the enemies of my soul? What are they? Do I hear wicked talk? do I see evil things, as I see the demons of drink, impurity, unbelief in my way? God will defend me if only I will trust Him. Am I sorely tried by real worries, by unkindness, by the oppression of people who are not God's people? Am I forced to work long hours, or to live in an unhealthy place, or amongst people who dislike me? It does happen to a Christian every now and then to find himself or herself alone in a household, or a workshop, or a regiment, or what not, and to find enemies to Christ are round. God will help him. There will be trials, difficulties; but never for one moment will God leave the very feeblest, most imperfect Christian who prays even feeble prayers to the

[1] Westcott on St. John's Epistles.

Father of souls. "All souls are Mine," God said once, speaking of His ancient people; even more are the souls of those who are brought into union with Him through our Lord by the blessed Spirit. Therefore I must not be afraid. God will not let any one, any wile of the devil, any wickedness of man pluck me out of His hand so long as my will is that I should be His child.

There is no doubt, however, that the worst enemies of the Church as a whole and of each single member come from within.

So let me pray this prayer very earnestly. The enemies of the Church are chiefly sins against love. Bitter quarrels, want of unity, caring for the things of this world.

Each Christian has his special enemies. What are mine? An evil temper, selfishness, or deceit, or self-indulgence—what? God will show His power if I will let Him.

"Be Thou my Guardian and my Guide,
And hear me when I call;
Let not my slippery footsteps slide,
And hold me lest I fall.

"The world, the flesh, and Satan dwell,
Around the path I tread;
O save me from the snares of hell,
Thou Quickener of the dead.

"And if I tempted am to sin,
And outward things are strong,
Do Thou, O Lord, keep watch within,
And save my soul from wrong.

"Still let me ever watch and pray,
And feel that I am frail;
That if the Tempter cross my way,
Yet he may not prevail." (282.)

THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

The Collect.

Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we, who for our evil deeds do worthily deserve to be punished, by the comfort of Thy grace, may mercifully be relieved; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Thought I.

"Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we, who for our evil deeds do worthily deserve to be punished."

Text.—"In the multitude of the sorrows that I had in my heart Thy comforts have refreshed my soul" (Ps. xciv. 19).

This is Refreshment Sunday, as it is sometimes called. We have reached the middle of Lent, and very often, if one has been trying ever so little to keep Lent in any way, one is a little apt to be discouraged. Perhaps I may feel this: "It doesn't seem much good trying to be extra strict, and it's very horrid continually thinking about one's sins, and I'm tired of it." The prayer for to-day just comes to cheer one up, to make one ready to turn away from the thought of one's sins to the thought of what sin cost our Lord.

Has Lent taught me to feel the least little bit that I do deserve punishment for *my* sins? Every year, please God, I shall grow in the knowledge of my own sinfulness,

grow in the Christian tenderness of conscience. At first, as I have often been taught, one's Christian life often goes through, as it were, a Jewish stage, when one has to think chiefly of "Thou shalt *not*." I must *not* say what is not true, pure, kind; I must not do this or that; but, please God, most of us rise to that stage to which our Lord draws us: "What wouldest Thou have me to do?" And then we feel each Lent how much we have left undone, and also actions, words, thoughts, which once would never have troubled us, do so now, so that we must come daily, weekly, yearly, with the tale of how we do deserve punishment. This sense of sin is the beginning of our turning to Christ, but it certainly does not vanish as we grow. As I *go on*, as I learn more of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, as I kneel oftener at the Sacrament of His love, as I receive the grace of pardon, as I see more and more how the love of God is round me, how He guides my life, I shall grow to *hate* my sins more and more—far more than I do now.

"Our sins, in Thy pure light descried,
Stand out in dread array;
But here, in Love's absolving tide,
Their guilt is washed away." (560.)

Thought II.

"Our evil deeds."

Text.—"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (1 Cor. xii. 27).

I thought yesterday of this prayer as one for each real Christian to pray. I saw how the sense of one's sins will grow, if it please God to grant one grace to grow in one's life. But this prayer is a prayer for the whole Church

to which I belong; and also it is a prayer for one's country. It is a very bad thing to let oneself think, and encourage other people to think, that one belongs to a perfect Church.

Rather one should try and see soberly what are the failings of the Church—how it is that in many ways we Church people fail in our duty to the heathen, to the children; how we fail in setting up a lofty standard, the standard of the Sermon on the Mount; how often the Church, the whole body of Christians, gets mixed up with the world, the whole body of people who live independently of God. And, especially, we should grieve for the sins of communicants. How is it that communicants do not bear more witness for Christ? I should pray God to make me *grow* in this sense of the sin of the whole body of Christ. Not thinking of the sins of a particular person, whom perhaps I don't like, but thinking of my sins as they affect Christ's body, and of the fact that Christ's Church is made up of so many faulty, sinful people. And the divisions between Christians should make me feel this sense of sin. Our Lord prayed His disciples might be one. How Christians hinder this wish of our Lord's! What can I do? I can do something. I can refuse to read books which, or listen to people who, denounce their fellow-Christians. I can refuse to believe people are wicked or silly because they happen to be Roman Catholics, High Church, or Nonconformists; I can try to find out what I and others believe rather than what we do *not* believe; I can read and pray over St. John's Gospel and Epistle; I can pray for the Spirit of love, and I can pray that more and more God will make all Christians feel the horror of quarrels amongst them who believe in the Holy Trinity and in all other Articles of the Christian faith.

And for our country, we—I—may pray this prayer with a

deep sense of the sins of our country. I know how terribly drink enslaves thousands, I know what horrible cheating in trade goes on, I know how awful sin slays its thousands; and drink, lust, bring far more misery than does that war in South Africa of which we have thought so much.[1]

Shall I not pray for my country too this same prayer?

> "Lord, shower upon us from above
> The sacred gift of mutual love;
> Each other's wants may we supply,
> And reign together in the sky." (273.)

THOUGHT III.

"By the comfort of Thy grace."

Text.—"MY GRACE IS SUFFICENT FOR THEE; FOR MY STRENGTH IS MADE PERFECT IN WEAKNESS" (2 Cor. xii. 9).

The last two Thoughts have brought home to me how much our sins deserve punishment.

Yet if one is turned to Christ, one *knows* God will relieve us—take away the burden.

Punishment does follow sometimes, both on Christians, one by one, and on the Church or a nation as a whole. And so, if sometimes it seems as if I had to bear the consequences of sins, I must *not* be discouraged and think God is not my loving Father. Only I may pray that He will ease the burden, and sometimes I may feel oppressed by my sins in this way.

I try so hard to overcome my bad temper, my lazy habits, my wrong thoughts, and yet I fail. Then is the time for the comfort, that is, the encouragement, of God. Then, if one has been trying and failing, and trying again, God our Father sends us the grace of His Holy Spirit to

[1] Written in 1900.

turn our thoughts away from our sins to the Lord Who bore them, to the thought of the love Jesus Christ has for each one of us, for *me*. It is good for each Christian to feel the burden of sin, to take solemn times such as Lent for the thinking of his or her sins; but it is not good to be always dwelling on our sins. Rather one should think of Jesus. And so it is with the Church, with our country. At times, in Lent, on Fridays one may indeed pray about the sins of the Church, of our country, but one must not neglect to pray to God to "show us His work." There are saints in this Church of ours now. There are hopeful signs round us. God may punish us, but that is just the very sign that He will not leave us. And therefore at all times, if my heart fails me because I fall so often, or because I see in spite of my not wishing to see, that there is often great evil round me, let me pray this prayer:

"Lord Jesus, think on me,
With many a care opprest;
Let me Thy loving servant be,
And taste Thy promised rest." (185.)

Thought IV.

"May mercifully be relieved."

Text.—"He that eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him" (St. John vi. 56).

God does often ease the troubled soul. He does see that it is good for us to bear something, just a shadow, a faint reflection, of what the Lord bore of the sense of deserving punishment. It is a really blessed thing when any one feels this—that really and truly he or she needed the particular trouble God sent. I must not expect to feel this all at once.

But even the youngest in the school of Christ knows a little of the burden of sins. And how does He relieve us? How do we get the comfort of His grace? First, by the presence of Jesus in the soul. In the Holy Communion the weakest Christian receives the life of Jesus, and little by little that Presence makes Itself more and more felt. That is what is called habitual grace.

So on this Refreshing Sunday I should think of the Holy Communion as it is explained in the sixth chapter of St. John, of which the Gospel for this week is a part. I cannot pray this prayer rightly unless I come to this Holy Sacrament. No one who desires to be taught more of the meaning and depth of the blessed Sacrament can do better than buy and read and pray over *The Food of Immortality*, by the Rev. W. H. Trevelyan, price 1*s.* 8*d.* It would be an excellent plan to read one of the chapters and the verses of St. John which it explains, on Saturdays before one's Communion.

Secondly, God gives us each special help as occasion demands. Sudden temptations attack us, special troubles overwhelm us, and we pray to God Who, in His love, sends us fresh outpourings of grace to meet that special temptation or trouble. (It need not be a very out-of-the-way or unusual trouble or trial.) All through the long day, as one meets temptation, one must lift up one's soul, and each morning and each night one asks for this grace. This special help is called actual grace. The habitual grace of God, the abiding life of Christ, is obtained through the Sacraments, especially the Holy Communion. Actual grace comes to us in many ways, chiefly through prayer; but also sermons, good books, good friends, music, the beauty of God's sky, and sea, and earth, may be made by Him channels of grace.

Let me pray, now, before I go out, that in all troubles, perplexities, sadness, God will send His grace to relieve my

pain, but also that more and more I may grow in the life of Jesus, that He will abide in me more and more.

"I am not worthy, Holy Lord,
That Thou shouldst come to me;
Speak but the word; one gracious word
Can set the sinner free.

"I am not worthy; cold and bare
The lodging of my soul:
How canst Thou deign to enter there?
Lord, speak and make me whole.

"I am not worthy; yet, my God,
How can I say Thee nay—
Thee, Who didst give Thy Flesh and Blood
My ransom-price to pay?

"O come in this sweet morning hour,
Feed me with Food Divine:
And fill with all Thy love and power
This worthless heart of mine." (323.)

THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Passion Sunday

THE COLLECT.

WE beseech Thee, Almighty God, mercifully to look upon Thy people; that by Thy great goodness they may be governed and preserved evermore, both in body and soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THOUGHT I.

"We beseech Thee, Almighty God, mercifully to look upon Thy people."

Text.—"WHO GAVE HIMSELF FOR US, THAT HE MIGHT REDEEM US FROM ALL INIQUITY, AND PURIFY UNTO HIMSELF A PEOPLE FOR HIS OWN POSSESSION, ZEALOUS OF GOOD WORKS" (Tit. ii. 14).

This, again, is a prayer for the whole Church of God—His people—that He will look upon, think of them, care for them.

This brings two thoughts to my mind. First, Why are we God's people at all? Surely these two weeks on which I am entering teach me this: because we are Christ's redeemed. God cared so much for us that He gave us Jesus. And our Lord died and rose that He might gather to Himself what St. Peter calls a "peculiar people," set apart for Him.

Therefore in all troubles, especially troubles which touch

the Church, the attacks of unbelieving people, the dreadful quarrels among Christians, let me remember this—God cares for those whom Jesus has saved. God knows the sorrows and perplexities of each and all His children. Therefore in some great trouble, some time when things seem going very wrong, when I hear holy things and holy people mocked, scoffed at, blasphemed, all that I can do is to pray this prayer, "Look on Thy people."

Next, to be one of God's people, one of His servants, is to be at peace, to be absolutely sure of His love. God looks on His people one by one; He cares for us each individually—deals with us one by one, not in masses.

Therefore I can ask Him to look on me. I may have people and things around me which make it particularly hard for me to pray, to be good at all.

God knows it all; He will look upon me.

And again, some sickness, some trouble comes, or will come, to me. Perhaps I am very much alone. Oh, when this sort of thing comes, let me remember God sees *me*, knows, cares for me.

"Thy people." Am I acting as one of these people? I was brought into the number of God's people by my Baptism, but am I still one of His?

Is there anything in my life which would show those among whom I live that I am one of His?

These weeks show me what the Cross of Christ was to Him. Is there any mark of that Cross on my life?

Have I at all taken home to myself that to be one of God's people means taking our Lord Jesus for one's Saviour, one's Master, one's Lord. Is He anything to me?

> "The royal banners forward go,
> The Cross shines forth in mystic glow;
> Where He in flesh, our Flesh who made,
> Our sentence bore, our ransom paid.

"There whilst He hung, His sacred Side
By soldier's spear was opened wide,
To cleanse us in the precious flood
Of Water mingled with His Blood.

"Fulfilled is now what David told
In true prophetic song of old,
How God the heathen's King should be;
For God is reigning from the Tree.

"O Tree of glory, Tree most fair,
Ordained those Holy Limbs to bear,
How bright in purple robe it stood,
The purple of a Saviour's Blood!

"Upon its arms, like balance true,
He weighed the price for sinners due,
The price which none but He could pay,
And spoiled the spoiler of his prey.

"To Thee, eternal Three in One,
Let homage meet by all be done:
As by Thy Cross Thou dost restore,
So rule and guide us evermore." (96.)

Thought II.

"They may be governed and preserved . . . in body and soul."

Text.—"I BESEECH YOU THEREFORE, BRETHREN, BY THE MERCIES OF GOD, TO PRESENT YOUR BODIES A LIVING SACRIFICE, HOLY, ACCEPTABLE TO GOD, WHICH IS YOUR REASONABLE SERVICE" (Rom. xii. 1).

Do I really take home to myself the sacredness of the body—of this bodily life of mine?

The Bible and the Church teach us this continually. The Sacraments reach our souls through our bodies. So we

pray God to rule the bodies of His people and preserve them.

Is my bodily life ruled by God? For, as has been said, "The body's deeds are the soul's deeds. What the body is allowed to become, that the soul has become already. We cannot separate them and say, 'I will be heavenly in soul, earthly, sensual, devilish only in my body.'" [1]

Am I ruling, or rather, am I letting my body be ruled, by the Holy Spirit? Do I guard myself as to purity? My eyes and ears are, as it were, sentinels which warn me against danger. Do I check myself in reading such things as reports of wickedness in newspapers or in going to bad plays? Do I listen to wicked talk, wicked songs? Do I run into temptation? If so, how can I pray this prayer? And so with temperance in food, drink, pleasure? Does God rule my body, or is it my own inclinations which are my rulers?

If God rules me, then in time I shall grow to know perfect freedom. If my own will rules me, I shall become a slave.

But I must pray this prayer for all the life of the Church. I must pray that God will govern and preserve what we call "physical" conditions; that is, the things which affect bodily life; that more and more He will turn people's hearts so that they will not force their brothers and sisters to work at unhealthy trades, to work in unhealthy places, or for too little money; that people more and more will try to prevent overcrowding; that the terrible drink traffic may be overruled.

All these things hinder the true life of God's people. O God, help us to make our bodily life holy. Here are some more words from the same beautiful book, *Christian Life a*

[1] Fr. Congreve's *Christian Life a Response*, p. 77.

Response: "The body comes to be really the instrument of the soul; for it is not by *thinking* good that you become good. God gives you hands and feet, health and strength, bodily pleasure and cheerfulness, that you may turn good thoughts, which flash through your mind and are gone, into something eternal—into deeds which in turn constitute habits—thy character" (p. 77).

"Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.

"Take my moments and my days;
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

"Take my hands and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love.

"Take my feet and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee.

"Take my voice and let me sing
Always, only for my King.

"Take my lips and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee."

—From the Hymn-book of St. Mary Magdalene, Munster Square.

THOUGHT III.

"They may be governed and preserved evermore . . . in soul."

Text.—"AND THE GOD OF PEACE HIMSELF SANCTIFY YOU WHOLLY; AND MAY YOUR SPIRIT AND SOUL AND BODY BE PRESERVED ENTIRE, WITHOUT BLAME AT THE COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST" (1 Thess. v. 23).

The soul—that is the part of us which is the seat of all

our passions, feelings, inclinations, and capacities. It is in our souls that we fight the great battle which is to decide whether we win or lose; our souls—that soul which is so precious, which at the end of all will go, shivering and unclothed, from the body to God.

If we give ourselves to God to be ruled, He will, by His Holy Spirit, rule all our being, and preserve—keep it safe. What is it, this ruling of God? It is that I—I who read these words—give myself, my love, my power of work—whether it be work with my hands or my head—my love for music, or poetry, or any other gift—it may be a pair of clever hands, or a power of quick sympathy—all these I give to God. Then my love for all He has given me—husband or wife, child or friend—will be made holy by Him. I shall be ready to do the best for those I love, not only just what pleases them for the moment; *e.g.*, the mother whose love for the child is ruled by God will make her child obedient, and will help it to deny itself such things as unwholesome food, because she is able to give herself the pain of paining it. I shall use my gifts for Him, trying to get at the best and noblest. I must give my whole self to God.

Then the third part of my nature—my spirit (I notice in the text how St. Paul speaks of body, soul, and spirit)—is set free to turn to God. It is that part of my nature which can wish for and love God; and this, which we call our spiritual nature, must not be crushed out. It will be if we do not give up our bodies and souls to God's rule. "*The spirit*"—it is that part of us which helps us to see the deep things of God, to pray to God, to think about Him, to delight in Him. People sometimes have these spiritual gifts—this power of understanding what it is to pray, what it is to love God—who are not at all clever or rich. It is by the power of the Holy Ghost given to those who simply give them-

selves to Christ, and who order their lives with the one end to please God.

Again, as Father Congreve tells us, "It is just your personal turning to God that is wanted, your 'Come, Holy Ghost,' your small faculty of believing, hoping, loving *exerted*. It is a very small faculty, but use it, and it is God in all His greatness that flows into your life through it." [1]

Faculty—that is, power, capacity. I know what being capable means.

Let me pray God to take me and all His people under His rule, to keep us there, and so to govern us that more and more we may have the spiritual power to understand spiritual blessings—a power which is often quite wanting in people who are clever, rich, and great in the world's eyes.

"Saviour, blessèd Saviour,
Listen whilst we sing,
Hearts and voices raising
Praises to our King;
All we have we offer;
All we hope to be,
Body, soul, and spirit,
All we yield to Thee." (305.)

This week has only three Thoughts. For the remaining days of this Passion Week can I not read daily a few verses of St. John vi. from verse 32? And if I can get a book called *The Food of Immortality*, I might read one, or part of one, of the chapters each day. Or I could take St. John xviii. and read a few verses each day. It is best to read these kneeling, and to say this prayer before beginning—"Come, Holy Ghost, into my heart"; and at the end, "Grant, I pray Thee, Lord, to me Thy servant pardon and peace, that I

[1] I have ventured to use English here, not Latin. *Christian Life a Response*, p. 119.

may serve Thee all this day." This takes such a little time; and if there is a church near me, it is such a good habit to slip into it for five minutes, on my way to work, or in the dinner hour, or some other time, and read my few verses on my knees before God.

PALM SUNDAY

The Collect.

Almighty and everlasting God, Who, of Thy tender love towards mankind, has sent Thy Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, to take upon Him our flesh, and to suffer death upon the Cross, that all mankind should follow the example of His great humility; mercifully grant, that we may both follow the example of His patience, and also be made partakers of His resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"Almighty and everlasting God, Who, of Thy tender love towards mankind, hast sent Thy Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, to take upon Him our flesh, and to suffer death upon the Cross."

Text.—"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (St. John iii. 16).

There are many thoughts suggested by these first words of the Collect.

Let me take one: the love of God.

We do not know much about the reason of evil. Evil and many, many other things are mysteries—hidden things, which God may possibly explain to us in the life to come, but which we cannot hope to understand in this world.

But sin does spoil God's world, and, in His love, God sent the cure.

The love of God. I must never think that the Father was angry and Jesus Christ turned away His anger—turned it on Himself. No. The blessed Trinity, as it were, *planned* our salvation, and Jesus came, took on Him our human nature, and by His perfect obedience unto death showed a perfect man, and now makes His members, through the Holy Spirit, share His perfect manhood—His life.

Now, is the love of God a reality to me? Let me for this week turn my thoughts on that love. It is right I should think of my sins; but let me think most of all this week of God's tender love.

If only I can take this home to myself, God loves *me*. Then by degrees that love will wrap me all round. I shall be able to do and bear what my Father sends me to do and to bear.

But it may be I cannot believe God loves me. Then just let me ask myself, would it make any difference to me if there were no Jesus—if Good Friday had never been? And if I feel that I should be frightened if I knew I were going to die to-day, then let me remember death will come, and on my knees let me pray that our Father will make me feel He loves me. Jesus loves me, the Holy Spirit is pleading with me to accept this love. Do I deserve God's love? Not at all, but there it is for me to cling to. Let me try this week ever so little to think of Jesus dying that I might live.

O my God, Thou lovest me, Thou callest me; help me to answer to Thy love.

"O Love Divine, how sweet thou art!
When shall I find my willing heart
All taken up by thee?

I thirst, I faint, I die to prove
The greatness of redeeming love,
The love of Christ for me.

"Stronger His love than death or hell;
Its riches are unsearchable;
The first-born sons of light
Desire in vain its depths to see;
They cannot reach the mystery,
The length, and breadth, and height.

"God only knows the love of God;
O that it now were shed abroad
In this poor stony heart!
For love I sigh, for love I pine;
This only portion, Lord, be mine,
Be mine this better part.

"For ever would I take my seat
With Mary at the Master's feet;
Be this my happy choice;
My only care, delight, and bliss,
My joy, my heaven on earth, be this,
To hear the Bridegroom's voice." (195.)

Thought II.

"Mercifully grant that we may both follow the example of His patience."

Text.—"Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, threatened not" (1 St. Pet. ii. 23).

Now comes the prayer of this Collect. *We*, Christians, who are called by His name, pray that we may be patient. Patience means endurance, learning to bear. Is there this in my life? It is a point in which so many Christians fail.

Do I? It would be so easy to be a Christian if it only meant going to very bright services, and singing hymns, and now and then doing something for a friend which was not too troublesome. But to be a Christian means nothing less than complete giving up of oneself to Christ, and it does sometimes happen that after a while, after the uplifting of one's first Communion or a fresh conversion, one is apt to get tired. This week is a great opportunity of renewing one's conversion. Is there anything in my life which is hard to bear? Have I to bear mocking, jeers, insults, because it is known I go to Holy Communion or use sacramental confession.[1] Or have I to live with people who try my temper, or who are unkind, unjust, hard to please?

Or is there the shadow of a great sorrow over my life? or have I to bear pain, sickness, or poverty? Any of these things sometimes make even a disciple, a follower of Christ, cry out, but this is the text to bear in mind, "He that endureth unto the end shall be saved." Am I trying to *bear*? This is the lesson especially of Holy Week; learning patience. Do I train myself in bearing small trials? Do I allow the weather, or new arrangements in my family, or the petty trials of not having the exact food I like (any one is right to complain gently of badly cooked, or unwholesome food), to put me out? Do I make the people round me perfectly miserable if *I* am disappointed, or if I have lost something, or because I am, or imagine myself to be, slighted? Patience in this sort of trials does train one to bear the heavy trials. It is good even to restrain violent displays of grief before others, and above all the silly, hysterical sobbing to which some women, and now and then some men, yield. In all these trials let me remember Jesus' patience.

[1] Confession in the presence of a minister of God, followed by the message of forgiveness.

If I am tired, I must pray. These trials, great or small, are allowed by my Father to train me for Him. I can bear my cross after *Jesus*. I can offer to Him all my sufferings in mind or body.

"O Love most patient, give me grace;
Make all my soul athirst for Thee;
That parched dry Lip, that fading Face,
That Thirst were all for me." (119.)

Thought III.

"And also be made partakers of His resurrection."

Text.—"Because I live, ye shall live also" (St. John xiv. 19).

That is the end, the object of all dying, of our Lord's death, of the death of sin; life, rising from the dead. But this partaking, this sharing in the resurrection, must be bought by death. Day by day, if we are in any sense Christians, we are dying to sin. Do I know anything of this? But to share in Christ's resurrection is our hope, our joy. When the troubles of this world press on me, when I am trying to follow the example of His patience, and everything seems hard, when I am called to bear pain, then let me remember that, after all, the end, the object of all this is joy, new life, the life of God.

No one can live without hope, without joy, any life that is worth living. And now, this moment, let me ask God to make all the pain, all the worries, all the griefs, fit me to share that risen life. For that means, living as Christ wants me to live, thinking the thoughts He wants me to think, speaking the words He wants me to speak, doing what He means me to do. Holy Week should teach me the purpose, the meaning of all sorrow, all suffering. When I see others suffer, when I am in sorrow myself,

God will help me to offer Him this pain, and to take the cross He holds out, sure that in time He will bring me to His holy hill and to His dwelling. Am I trying to please Him? do I feel these words mean anything to me?

If I want to make them real and true, God will teach me. To pray this prayer rightly, to have it answered, means that even now Jesus gives us a joy which no man taketh from us.

"O most sweet Jesu, hear the sighs
Which unto Thee we send;
To Thee our inmost spirit cries,
To Thee our prayers ascend." (178.)

GOOD FRIDAY

First Collect.

Almighty God, we beseech Thee graciously to behold this Thy family, for which our Lord Jesus Christ was contented to be betrayed, and given up into the hands of wicked men, and to suffer death upon the cross, who now liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Text.—"From Whom every family in heaven and on earth is named" (Eph. iii. 15).

God's family. That is the opening Thought of the Collect, for to-day. The Family of God are gathered together to think about the death of Him Who is their Elder Brother—of that Saviour who has given the Family its name and its existence. Do I take home to myself that I am one of this great household? I know how, in a well-ordered, holy household, there are love, discipline, food, all that are needed. So it is with God's Family: if only I will claim my place, I shall find more and more that in this household of God—the Church—God in His love gives to our souls all we need.

Only I must submit my will, my life, to Him, the Elder Brother. Have I done so? Can I resist Him to-day? I kneel before His Cross, that Cross to which, as the Collect says, He was brought by wicked men. (I must always remember that it was the wicked "worldly world which crucified Christ simply because He was opposed to it.")

Do the facts which I recount in the Collect mean much to me? I may not be able to feel very much, but do I mean to take the crucified and risen Jesus for my Master? That is what Good Friday should awaken in me. And this Collect speaks the calm words which Christians should be able to speak. We *know*, as St. John in his Epistle tells us, that we are His sons; so we pray for each other, for all who are of His Family. Do I pray for my fellow-Christians? If I am a communicant, I should grow in this longing to pray for "the brethren," as Christians are called in the New Testament. Do I care for my fellow-communicants? Do I care that the Family of God should increase? Do I care for the little children I see brought to Christ in Baptism and made members of His Family? Do I pray for those members who are weak, who fail often, who neglect their Communions? Please God, from to-day I will pray more for God's great Family, not forgetting those who are beyond the veil, but who are fellow-members with us.

"One family, we dwell in Him,
One Church above, beneath;
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death." (221.)

THE SECOND COLLECT.

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, by Whose Spirit the whole body of the Church is governed and sanctified; receive our supplications and prayers, which we offer before Thee for all estates of men in Thy holy Church, that every member of the same, in his vocation and ministry, may truly and godly serve Thee; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Text.—"LET US CONSIDER ONE ANOTHER TO PROVOKE UNTO LOVE" (from the Epistle).

Again we have the thought of the whole Church; but in this Collect we are praying that the Church, the Family for whom Jesus died, may answer to His love. First of all, the Collect praises God for the fact that the Church is holy. Why? Because the Holy Spirit dwells in the Church. Then comes the prayer "that every member . . . may truly and godly serve Thee.

"In his vocation and ministry." Do I know that every baptized, confirmed Christian is a priest, has a holy service to perform, has to *offer* his or her whole life as a sacrifice to God? The Christian ministry has a different degree of priests; but we are all priests, for we all have to offer ourselves, "our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy and lively (living) sacrifice."[1] So this Collect is a prayer for all who are Christ's. We may think of that prayer of our Lord in St. John xvii. Do I pray for my fellow-Christians? Do I long that Christians may be real followers of the Lord Jesus, sharing in His life of sacrifice?

And do I take home to myself that whatever my calling and work of service (ministry) are, I am to offer all I do to God! *All!* Work, whether it be in daily toil, with my hands or my head, or the care of a household; endurance, a life of sorrow or pain, joy, wedded love, or any other pure affection, gifts of mind or body—all are to be given back to God. If only communicants realized this glorious life of sacrifice, of consecration, what a living power the Church would be! Do I feel what the dear Lord has done for me? Can I refuse to give Him what He asks—myself, my all?

"When I survey the wondrous Cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

[1] First Post-Communion prayer.

"Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast
Save in the Cross of Christ my God;
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His Blood.

"See from His Head, His Hands, His Feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingling down;
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

"To Christ, Who won for sinners grace
By bitter grief and anguish sore,
Be praise from all the ransomed race
For ever and for evermore." (108.)

The Third Collect.

O MERCIFUL God, Who hast made all men, and hatest nothing that Thou hast made, nor wouldest the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live; have mercy upon all Jews, Turks, Infidels, and Hereticks, and take from them all ignorance, hardness of heart, and contempt of Thy Word; and so fetch them home, blessed Lord, to Thy flock, that they may be saved among the remnant of the true Israelites, and be made one fold under one Shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

Text.—"BEHOLD, ALL SOULS ARE MINE" (Ezek. xviii. 4).

Now we pass from our prayers for the whole Church to a prayer for those who are not of that Church.

"Turks" means followers of the prophet Mahomet; "Infidels," those who deny the existence of God—probably these are not so large a class as formerly; "Hereticks," those who choose their own religion, are very numerous. I can pray for any one who is perplexed by doubts, who cuts himself or herself adrift from people who hold false views. The word heretic sounds harsh, but it really means one who chooses his religion.

Do I pray "Thy kingdom come"? Do I long that the poor people who deny God, the people who hold false views, the poor souls who are restless, sad, puzzled, may be brought to Jesus? The Collect prays that the hindrances, ignorance, hardness of heart, contempt, may be taken away. Very, very often, especially among people who, simply for shortness, we will class among Infidels and Heretics, some are kept back by one of these three causes. Sins, especially sins of impurity and love of what money can give, do harden the heart so that the story of Good Friday has no effect on it. Ignorance is often wilful. People won't come to instructions, or read good books, most of all the Bible. They will not put themselves to school and be taught the Creeds. "Contempt." Yes, there is a great want of "the fear of the Lord." God hates sin. And one cannot but fear, when one sees people breaking His plain commandments about marriage, purity, honesty, and so on, with absolute fearlessness.

To-day, at the foot of the Cross, let me pray for sinners, and for those who never heard of Christ.

"Almighty God, Whose only Son
O'er sin and death the triumph won,
And ever lives to intercede
For souls who Thy sweet mercy need;

"In His dear Name to Thee we pray
For all who err and go astray,
For sinners, wheresoe'er they be,
Who do not serve and honour Thee.

"There are who never yet have heard
The tidings of Thy blessèd Word,
But still in heathen darkness dwell,
Without one thought of Heaven or hell.

"And some within Thy sacred fold
To holy things are dead and cold,
And waste the precious hours of life
In selfish ease, or toil, or strife.

"And many a quickened soul within
There lurks the secret love of sin,
A wayward will, or anxious fears,
Or lingering taint of bygone years.

"O give repentance true and deep
To all Thy lost and wandering sheep,
And kindle in their hearts the fire
Of holy love and pure desire.

"That so from Angel-hosts above
May rise a sweeter song of love,
And we, with all the blest, adore
Thy name, O God, for evermore." (363.)

EASTER EVE

The Collect.

Grant, O Lord, that as we are baptized into the death of Thy blessed Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, so by continual mortifying our corrupt affections we may be buried with Him; and that, through the grave, and gate of death, we may pass to our joyful resurrection; for His merits, Who died, and was buried, and rose again for us, Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Text.—"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof" (Rom. vi. 12).

To-day the Collect, the Epistle, the Lessons, teach us much of what our Baptism means.

It is a "death unto sin." That is what the Christian life should be all the way along—a dying to sin. "Mortify" means, "doing to death." Our Baptism starts us, and the other part of life is what Easter teaches us, "rising to new life."

Now is there any "doing to death" of sin in my life? One can easily see that if a person who wants to be a Christian is tempted by drink, or impurity, or dishonesty, he or she *must* cut off these things. The drink must be given up, all pleasures, or companions, or books, or plays, which incite one to sins of the flesh. But, if my sins

are not so bad in the eyes of my world, do I feel I must *do* them to death? A bad temper? it must be conquered. An evil habit of gossip, and saying unkind things? it must be destroyed. A habit of putting myself, my pleasure, first—of selfishness? it must be done to death. Ah! our fight is hard, but the Lord is very tender. He will kill these things in us, mortify them, if we will give ourselves to Him; and if we share in His death, we shall share in His life. All through this life of dying to sin Jesus is ever near. Over and over again we can come and hear His sweet message of forgiveness, and go away with our souls washed. We can be fed with His own body and blood. Christ does not tell us it will be easy to do our sins to death; nay, He tells us it is sometimes like plucking out our right eye; but He does promise what all who live His life know, that little by little He gives them Joy. Yes, and by-and-by—He will bring them through the grave and gate of death, safe to the resurrection.

We think much to-day of the holy dead. Our Lord spent this day in Paradise. Now death, solemn and awful as it is, is only the gate to Paradise, where those who died to sin on earth await their perfect consummation and bliss, to which of His mercy may He bring us all.

"With Christ we share a mystic grave,
With Christ we buried lie;
But 'tis not in the darksome cave
By mournful Calvary.

"The pure and bright baptismal flood
Entombs our nature's stain:
New creatures from the cleansing wave
With Christ we rise again.

"Thrice blest, if through this world of strife,
And sin, and selfish care,

Our snow-white robe of righteousness
We undefilèd wear.

"Thrice blest, if through the gate of death
All glorious and free
We to our joyful rising pass,
O risen Lord, with Thee." (561.)

EASTER DAY.

The Collect.

Almighty God, Who through thine only-begotten Son Jesus Christ hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life; we humbly beseech Thee, that, as by Thy special grace preventing us Thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by Thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Thought I.

"Almighty God, Who through thine only-begotten Son Jesus Christ hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life."

Text.—"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above" (from the Epistle for to-day).

The Collect to-day opens with a great burst of praise, and joy; and any one, however busy, or poor, or sorrowful, can enter into this joy.

For Easter comes, and all our Services, all our readings in Psalms, Lessons, Epistles, and Gospels teach us this. God has made it worth while for us all—for *me*—to try to be good, to choose what is best.

"Overcome death." Do I take home to myself what this

means? Death is now, to all who are Christ's, the door into life.

Death is awful, death is our last great penance, but to Christians the sting of death is gone. Surely I can understand this. It is because our Lord has risen that we are sure we shall rise also. And, therefore, if I am His, I can trust myself and all those I love to His keeping. Only do let me remember that all this joy is only for those who are sharers in Christ's death, in Christ's life. Let me read over on my knees the Epistle for to-day. Am I "doing to death" those sins of which St. Paul speaks? If so, though I may fail very often, if I come back in sorrow and ask for fresh forgiveness, fresh renewal, He will give me fresh life.

Therefore, do let me pray God this Easter Day to help me to look away from sin, the miserable failures of my life, from sorrows and worries, straight up to Him, to teach me by His Holy Spirit what Christian joy and thankfulness are. There is no gladness like the gladness which comes to those who with full assurance that their sins are forgiven kneel at their Easter Communion and go out and try to live the risen life.

"'Welcome, happy morning!' age to age shall say;
Hell to-day is vanquished! Heaven is won to-day!
Lo! the Dead is living, God for evermore!
Him their true Creator, all His works adore;
'Welcome, happy morning!' age to age shall say.

"Loose the souls long prisoned, bound with Satan's chain;
All that now is fallen raise to life again;
Show Thy Face in brightness, bid the nations see!
Bring again our daylight: day returns with Thee;
Hell to-day is vanquished! Heaven is won to-day!"

(497.)

Thought II.

"We humbly beseech Thee, that, as by Thy special grace preventing us."

Text.—"My grace is sufficient for thee" (2 Cor. xii. 9).

God's grace is always going before us.

That is the meaning of "prevent" as it is used in the Prayer Book. "Prevent us," go before us. And so it is that His grace is always round us. And from the joy of Easter comes the prayer that this Easter joy may be for good.

Because Jesus has risen, we are able to live in the kingdom of God. We are brought by His resurrection, and our Baptism, to be "in heavenly places." So we need—*I* need—have no fears about not having all the supplies of grace I need. Am I at all trying to live the life of a baptized Christian? Then I need only come and claim God's great gifts.

There are two ways of looking at God's grace. He gives us what is called habitual grace—the presence of Jesus; this habitual grace comes to us chiefly in the blessed Sacrament.

But the grace about which we think to-day is the special grace for each daily, hourly need. God is so infinitely good to us, He sees every need of every soul; He sees what special grace *my* soul needs. Do I ask him to give me special grace for my special wants?

Easter is meant to lift me up into joy, but—unless I bring all my troubles, my difficulties, my needs to our Lord—I shall find it impossible to go on living in joy. Each Easter should find me a little further on, a little more capable of understanding what it is to know with all one's heart that Christ

has risen, and that He is ready to pour out on me all the help, all the gifts which my soul is fit to receive.

"Make every heart that is Thy dwelling place
A watered garden filled with fruits of grace" (559.)

Thought III.

"Thou dost put into our minds good desires."

Text.—"It is God Which worketh in you both to will and to work, for His good pleasure" (Phil. ii. 13).

This is one work of special grace.

Good wishes, upward longings, rush into our hearts especially at Easter. As we kneel at our Easter Communion we often feel real wishes to be good, to love Jesus. Has He given me any desire to-day?

There may be a longing in the soul for more prayer, for more means of grace, for more frequent Communion, for the gift of absolution.

There may be a longing to do something for Him. There may come into one's heart at this time a great desire to go on, to give oneself still further to the risen Lord.

If such wishes arise in my heart to-day, or at any time, I must pray over them. Sometimes one's wishes, even for good things, are not God's wishes. But the longing to be better, the little beginning of "hunger and thirst after righteousness" are His; and it is so blessed when He puts into our hearts such desires.

"O Lord, put right desires, holy longings, into my heart; let me learn to wish above all things to do Thy will. For, unless one really wants to be Christ's, one never will be. A saint was once asked, "My father, how can I become a Saint?" "If you wish it very much, you will become one," replied the holy man.

And so it is God's special grace going before us which gives us first the very wish to be good—to come to Jesus. And then he kindles in the converted heart fresh desires. If I don't feel that I care very much about these things, if God is not first in my life, then let me pray to Him, "put into my mind good desires."

It may be I don't feel any particular desire to be confirmed, to come to Communion ; or, if I am a communicant, and yet do not feel any desire to be more like Christ, to love Him more, to please Him, I must pray this prayer. It is not a safe state in which to be. I must pray that He will give me a desire for fresh conversion, an entire self-surrender.

"O grant us peace, that, by Thy peace possessed,
Thy life within us we may manifest." (559.)

Thought IV.

"So by Thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect ; through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Text—"He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me" (St. John xiv. 21).

This is the climax. Jesus has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers ; in this kingdom are stored up endless gifts of grace. By His special grace He pours upon us, who are His, desires for goodness ; and now we pray that He will give us continual help to put those desires into action. Continual help—that is, His habitual grace. Each Communion increases His indwelling presence. And so, when God has given to all souls the longings after greater goodness—the wish to conquer, say, a bad temper, a habit of nagging, a jealous, surly disposition, or anything else—He will give us in His mercy continual, never-failing help. Or,

it may be, He gives to one a desire to do more for Him ; and straight before one lies a duty, it may be, to help some one in his work, or to teach another, or to put oneself out for another's sake. And we need His continual help to go on after the first impulse has passed away.

And to some souls there comes just this, " Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do ? " and He shows in time how the desire to serve Him can be carried out in fulness.

It is just this that Easter teaches us : giving ourselves to our risen Lord, for Him to use, for Him to pour out all the treasures of His grace upon us. It is so dreadful if we don't want to go on—to be all He wants us to be. Just to escape being lost—is that all I want? Or is it to lose none of His grace—to do, to be, all He wants me to be, to do ?

Please God, that is my desire, and more and more He will bring that desire to good effect ; that is, He will lead me to the life of service for Him, which is perfect freedom and eternal joy.

" Each holy purpose help us to fulfil ;
Increase our faith to feed upon Thee still " (559.)

THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

The Collect

Almighty Father, Who hast given Thine only Son to die for our sins, and to rise again for our justification; grant us so to put away the leaven of malice and wickedness, that we may alway serve Thee in pureness of living and truth; through the merits of the same Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"Almighty Father, Who hast given Thine only Son to die for our sins, and to rise again for our justification."

Text.—"Being therefore justified by faith, let us have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. v. 1).

Christ Jesus our Lord died on account of us and our sins, but He rose again; and His rising again makes us *just.* What does this mean? Is it not this?

God looks on each soul which pleads Christ's sacrifice as *in* Christ, as already that which He tells it to become. But this is because Christ has risen; because He is alive; because He gives us His risen life.

To be justified means that we *are* forgiven, that we are set free from guilt, that God looks on us as in Christ, as good, because He means to make us good by giving us the life of Christ through the Holy Spirit.

Do I *know* God has forgiven me? Have I taken Christ as my Saviour? Then slowly, but quite surely, I must live the risen life. That is the only way in which God can look on me as still forgiven.

Sometimes people make terrible mistakes, and think that if they say they trust in Jesus, that is all that is wanted. It is a terrible mistake to think that our Lord died and rose again, and that *because* He has being so good sin does not matter.

I cannot think too often of these words. Christ will not save us in our sins; He will save us from our sins. Is there any sin in my life from which I must be saved? Is there any past sin which perhaps I don't commit now because I am not tempted by it, but of which I have never repented?

If so, unless I bring it before God, possibly in the presence of His minister, and confess it, and ask Him to forgive me, I shall find it has left a root of bitterness.

But perhaps I have brought my sins to God, and I do know the need of forgiveness. In that case whatever worries, whatever troubles I may have, little by little God will give me His peace.

"O Christ, the heavens' Eternal King,
Creator, unto Thee we sing;
With God the Father ever One,
Co-equal, co-eternal Son.

"Thy Hand, when first the world began,
Made in Thine own pure Image man,
And linked to fleshly form of earth
A living soul of heavenly birth.

"And when the envious, crafty foe
Had marred Thy noblest work below,
Thou didst our ruined state repair
By deigning flesh Thyself to wear.

"Once of a Virgin born to save,
And now new-born from death's dark grave,
O Christ, Thou biddst us rise with Thee
From death to immortality.

"Eternal Shepherd, Thou art wont
To cleanse Thy sheep within the font—
That mystic bath, that grave of sin,
Where ransomed souls new life begin.

"Divine Redeemer, Thou didst deign
To bear for us the Cross of pain,
And freely pay the precious price
Of all Thy Blood in sacrifice.

"Jesu, do Thou to every heart
Unceasing Paschal joy impart;
From death of sin and guilty strife
Set free the new-born sons of life.

"All praise be Thine, O risen Lord,
From death to endless life restor'd;
All praise to God the Father be,
And Holy Ghost eternally." (129.)

Thought II.

"Grant us so to put away the leaven of malice and wickedness."

Text.—"Let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness" (1 Cor. v. 8).

Leaven is used generally, not always, in the Bible as a symbol for what is bad. The Jews at the Passover cast out all leaven from their houses,—this is what the text refers to. I know how a little yeast will work in a loaf of bread, so here the leaven of malice stands for very little tiny seeds of

evil allowed to spring up in the soul of a converted Christian. Malice—that is hatred, bad, spiteful feelings, wickedness—any sort of great sin—we pray we may put away the beginnings of such evils.

Now when one has deep within one's soul the little seed of love to God, the first beginnings of a real wish to serve Him, little by little this leaven will go all through one's life. But, supposing one allows some seemingly small seed of evil to remain in one's soul, little by little that seed will grow, that evil will leaven, just as yeast leavens a whole loaf. A little habit of idle gossip, a little habit of easily taking offence, a little self-indulgence in taking drink at odd times, a little way of pushing one's prayers and Communions aside, little by little these sins will grow up into very big faults.

Sometimes one sees the awful sight of a ruined life—some one who is the slave of drink, of impurity. No one ever became like this all at once. Let me never think I am safe. I am safe, indeed, so long as I watch and pray, and rule my life, or, rather, let Christ rule my life, but I am not safe if I give way to what I call little sins, little indulgences. What is the principle which rules my life? Is it duty or pleasure, serving Christ or getting on?

Do I find I care more or less about money as I grow older. The love of money is a leaven which does work in and spoil many, many Christian souls. One cannot say one is safe because one has not much money. If one finds that making money is the only thing for which one really cares, it is time indeed to ask God to help one to put away the leaven. The love of money makes people hard, cold, deaf to the call of God, to the needs of people around us.

It is the love of money which makes people cheat by selling spoiled food, and goods which are not what they are said to be, and so on. One must watch, pray God to show one what is the evil root which may spoil one's life.

"Abide with us, O Lord, to-day,
Fulfil us with Thy grace, we pray;
And with Thine own true sweetness feed
Our souls, from sin and darkness freed." (177.)

Thought III.

"That we may alway serve Thee in pureness of living and truth."

Text.—"The unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. v. 8).

I may feel a little surprised when I read St. John's expression, "*do* not the truth" (1 St. John i. 6). Speak the truth? yes, but how can one do it? By pureness of living; simply putting God first in one's life. That is the true life. Making one's life in church and out of church be all of a piece. Sometimes—and it is so sad to hear it—one hears it said, "So-and-so goes a lot to Church and to Communion, and he's very ill-tempered, and drives very hard bargains," and so on. Well, people are very apt to come down on Christians, doubly hard if they fall into faults, and it's very good for us that the world expects a good deal from us. But if this sort of things is true, then we are not "doing the truth"; we are not serving God in pureness of living. God wants *all* my life. He wants my worship in Church; He wants my prayers at home; and He wants my daily work, my gentleness, my truth, my temperance, my purity. If I fail Him, no one else can take my place and do my particular bit of service. That is a great thought for Easter. God wants *me*—my whole self.

To serve God in this way makes one's life little by little very simple and very lovely. Little by little one will grow. If one asks God for His grace, to have Him "always before one's eyes"; before one makes a new plan, before any

event, great or small, in the time of trouble, when I think I do well to be angry, when I am tempted or puzzled, let me ask God to show me His will. And in such a life as this there is no falseness, no pretence, no trying to seem richer, or cleverer, or more or less religious than one is, no pushing before others, no revenge; bit by bit all these drop away, and "Christ is formed in us the hope of glory."

"O Saviour, may we never rest
Till Thou art formed within,
Till Thou hast calmed our troubled breast
And crushed the power of sin." (272.)

THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

The Collect.

Almighty God, Who hast given Thine only Son to be unto us both a sacrifice for sin, and also an ensample of godly life; give us grace that we may always most thankfully receive that His inestimable benefit, and also daily endeavour ourselves to follow the blessed steps of His most holy life; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"Almighty God, Who hast given us Thine only Son to be unto us both a sacrifice for sin, and also an ensample of godly life."

Text.—"Leaving you an example, that ye should follow His steps" (1 St. Pet. ii. 21).

Here again the Collect teaches us of what our risen life is to be; it is "following Christ" to which we are called. That is what the Church is called on to be, what each Christian is called to be—a setting forth of Christ—trying to follow Christ's example.

For it is first of all to a life of *being* holy, *being* godly, to which we are called. It is by a life like Christ's that each Christian is to bear witness to the world around that Jesus Christ is risen.

Our Lord has died; He has risen one full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice for our sins—for my sins. And one by

one each Christian takes home to himself the truth, "Jesus died for me."

But then that is the beginning. But what then? is one to rest secure that all is right?

No, indeed; the forgiven Christian has to go on, to do no less work than showing forth Christ's life.

That is my task. Am I trying? Do I aim at making my life like Christ's? I am to be pure, gentle, holy, because the Lord's example is the only one I am to copy. If I set Jesus before me, will it not help me to resist evil—silly fashions, evil customs, wicked indulgences?

Can I not set this before me as a real bit of Easter teaching? I am to be as He was in this world. St. John tells us so in his most lovely Epistle. Therefore I must not be cast down if I find I am misunderstood, laughed at, unkindly treated sometimes, as Jesus was.

Ah, does this example seem too high, too far away? Let me remember that the Lord has not only been a sacrifice *for* us—me—but that He also does a work *in* me. It is His life which I have to live.

"O Jesus, I have promised
To serve Thee to the end;
Be Thou for ever near me,
My Master and my Friend;
I shall not fear the battle
If Thou art by my side,
Nor wander from the pathway
If Thou wilt be my Guide." (271.)

Thought II.

"Give us grace that we may always most thankfully receive that His inestimable benefit."

Text.—"Be ye thankful" (Col. iii. 15).

This is another thought. The risen life which the Church of Christ has to live is one of thankfulness. Each of us has to be thankful for that special blessing, *the* blessing of blessings, our Lord's death and resurrection.

Am I thankful? One great way of uniting in thanksgiving is by coming to the Church's great Thanksgiving. The Eucharist (which is one of, and perhaps the most beautiful of all the names for the Holy Communion) means thanksgiving. Those words, which I ought to know so well, in the prayer of oblation after the Communion, "We thy humble servants entirely desire Thy fatherly goodness mercifully to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving," mean the whole service which has just been offered to God.

In the Eucharist I can bring my own special thanksgiving for all or any of the mercies God has given me—for any answer to prayer, for any victory won, for any good thing which has come into my life or into the life of one I love.

Do I thank God? But, most of all, do I thank Him for the gift He gave of His dear Son? and do I thank Him by coming to the great Thanksgiving, the Eucharist? If I feel I cannot yet receive the blessed Sacrament each Sunday, each holy day, yet I should try to be present at our Lord's own service each week, or oftener, and receive His Body and Blood as often as my clergyman advises me. Let me try this Easter to make my services at Church, my prayers at home, more full of thanksgiving for God's great love. Morning and Evening Prayer are full of thanksgivings for our redemption, and the Morning Service points us on to the great thanksgiving—the Eucharist—and Evening Prayer looks back to it.

"Alleluia! sing to Jesus!
His the Sceptre, His the Throne;

Alleluia! His the triumph,
His the victory alone;
Hark! the songs of peaceful Sion
Thunder like a mighty flood;
Jesus out of every nation
Hath redeemed us by His blood." (316.)

Thought III.

"And also daily endeavour ourselves."

Text.—"Give us this day our daily bread" (St. Matt. vi. 12).

Sometimes, when one has been trying very hard to follow Christ, one gets tired, or one gets frightened because the years are so long. Or again, one thinks one's own daily life is so commonplace; if one could only have some really exciting piece of work, it would be different.

And so this word "daily" comes to check such thoughts or such fears. And the words of the Lord's Prayer teach one that it is one's duty to ask for *daily* help. Do I ever think of the prayer in Confirmation, "*Daily* increase in the Holy Spirit"?

I know surely that if any one wants to learn to play, say, the violin, he or she must practise every day. It would be no use to practise hard once a month. So it is with us. We are learning in Christ's school to be Christians. Day by day Christ's followers must practise Christian life. It is by the daily fight against bad temper, against indulgence in evil things, such as too much drinking, eating, idle talk, that every one of us—that *I*—must get into habits of gentleness, self-control, purity.

"Daily." Yes, there is a fight going on every day for good against evil in my soul. Each day that I try to follow Christ, each small conquest over sin, I am, by God's grace,

forming the character God wants me to have. And each failure, however small, each day that I forget my prayers, that I yield to some tiny bit of wrong indulgence, such as taking what people call "nips," *i.e.* small drinks, each day that I yield to any temptation, I am, bit by bit, forming the prayerless character, or the taste for strong drink, or something else which is not what God wants, and which will, bit by bit, destroy Christ's life. For no one becomes wholly Christ's, wholly what He desires His redeemed to be, *at once*, and no one becomes wholly bad at once. The drunkard becomes a drunkard little by little, and the Christian who ceases to follow Christ ceases because he or she despises daily struggles, small victories, and little sins.

"O happy band of pilgrims,
If onward ye will tread
With Jesus as your Fellow
To Jesus as your Head!

"O happy if ye labour
As Jesus did for men:
O happy if ye hunger
As Jesus hunger'd then!

"The Cross that Jesus carried,
He carried as your due;
The Crown that Jesus weareth,
He weareth it for you.

"The faith by which ye see Him,
The hope in which ye yearn,
The love that through all troubles
To Him alone will turn,

"The trials that beset you,
The sorrows ye endure,
The manifold temptations
That death alone can cure,—

"What are they but His jewels
Of right celestial worth?
What are they but the ladder
Set up to Heaven on earth?

"Oh, happy band of pilgrims,
Look upward to the skies,
Where such a light affliction
Shall win so great a prize." (224.)

Thought IV.

"The blessed steps of His most holy life."

Text.—"If any man serve Me, let him follow Me" (St. John xii. 26).

Day by day that is to be my aim—to follow Christ's steps, to *be* a reflection of Jesus Christ. If Jesus Christ is *in* me, if He gives me His life, then I must go in the world to show the Christian life.

What does following Christ mean? Surely it means acting as Jesus would have us act. I am angry; I want to quarrel with some one, to pay some one out: and then the Holy Spirit makes me remember the Lord's example, and I have to forgive, to forego my revenge. I want my own way, I want to put money, getting on, comfort, *first* in my life. But Jesus Christ put God's glory first, so must I; Jesus went about doing good, so must I.

I may be quite poor—so was Jesus; but I can do kindnesses, I can help the people among whom I live. Or I feel that through God's mercy I am living a perfectly respectable, perhaps comfortable life, and I shrink from people who are not so well off. Perhaps some one is sent into my life who is a "sinner" in the world's eyes as well as in God's. The follower of the Lord must do what seems to be the duty next him—do what he can to help.

Or I see that if I go on doing what is right—going to Communion, saying my prayers, or, it may be, standing out against some evil, some dishonest practice, some custom which leads to sin, I shall be persecuted, or perhaps lose the liking, the favour of certain people. But Jesus Christ went on to His death simply because He obeyed God. So must I face mocking, unkindness, dislike, if they come, *because* I am trying to serve God.

Again, if I follow Christ, I must not be frightened because it seems to me most of the people among whom I live or work are against me. Jesus did not pay attention to crowds. People may say it is nonsense to stand out against tricks of trade, against wicked customs, against drinking; or "my set of people," my "world," may make up their minds not to go to church, or not to believe in God, or to run after some new teacher, or to indulge in gambling, orgies of drinking, or what not. A follower of Jesus must be prepared to find himself or herself sometimes hated by the world. The world means the people who put God out of their lives; and as the world hated Christ, so every now and then a true follower of Jesus Christ finds himself hated, or despised, or laughed at by his own particular world. To follow Christ is joy, but it means readiness to suffer for His dear sake. It means whole-hearted service, not serving Him only when it is easy and I am with good people, but serving Him when I am alone, only one against many, when to be Christ's means suffering. Ah, yes, we can follow Jesus in pain. If ever I have to be in pain or sickness, let me think of Him, and pray to Him that I may hang on my cross beside Him. These are the words of an old writer, which I will read instead of a hymn:

"Take up therefore thy cross and follow Jesus; and thou shalt go into life eternal.

"He went before bearing His Cross, and died for thee on

the Cross ; that thou also mayest bear thy cross, and desire to die on the Cross.

"For if thou be dead with Him, thou shalt also live with Him ; and if thou be partaker of His punishment, thou shalt be also of His glory." [1]

[1] *The Imitation of Christ.* Dr. Bigg's translation, p. 127

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

The Collect.

Almighty God, Who shewest to them that be in error the light of Thy truth, to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness; grant unto all them that are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion, that they may eschew those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same; through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Thought I.

"Almighty God, Who shewest to them that be in error the light of Thy truth."

Text.—"To give light to them that sit in darkness" (from the Benedictus, St. Luke i. 79).

These first words speak of God bringing back those who are in error—those who have made mistakes. And this "error" means here mistakes about God, about serving Him, about our way of life.

People often seem to be wandering through the wilderness of this world, making mistakes all the time. Why? Because they have never really found Christ or tried to follow Him. There are many kinds of error. Sometimes people—and simply because they do not pray—do not put themselves to learn from Christ's Church, do not read the Bible; sometimes they fall into quite foolish mistakes about God and His religion.

Some people think that it does not really matter what

sort of life a person has led if he or she has said something about "trusting in Jesus," whereas the Bible is full, from end to end, of warnings that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

Some really good people set at nought the Sacraments "which Christ hath ordained."

Some people fall into grievous mistakes about the faith, the Creed. They say Christ was only a man, or that there is no God Who cares for us at all, and so on.

And sometimes God, in His great love, sends the light. The Lord Jesus Himself, who is the true light, comes to the erring soul. Why? Because that soul wants Christ. There are many people in grievous error, who do the best they can, and cry out for more light. And Christ comes, and, little by little, the truth is shown.

I must pray this prayer for any one I know who is making mistakes about the faith.

And I myself. Is it possible I am in error? Do I neglect any Sacrament or religious duty which the Church to which I belong invites me? Do I say, "I don't see any use in Confirmation or in Communion"? Do I say, "I don't believe in missions"? Do I laugh at people who observe Lent? If there is anything which I am holding out against —which I am taught about in Church, let me do this— pray to God to show me if I am "in error."

"Almighty God, Whose only Son
O'er sin and death the triumph won,
And ever lives to intercede
For souls who Thy sweet mercy need;

"In His dear Name to Thee we pray
For all who err and go astray,
For sinners, wheresoe'er they be,
Who do not serve and honour Thee." (363.)

Thought II.

"To the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness."

Text.—"To guide our feet into the way of peace" (from the Benedictus, St. Luke i. 79).

Why does God show us the light in our darkness? That we may not walk in darkness, but, that as we saw in the Thoughts about Advent, we may cast all dark things away. Sin and error are darkness, God's truth is light and peace. If we believe rightly, we must live rightly. Of course I know it is possible to say the Creed and think I believe it, in a dull, mechanical way; but that is not holding the living truth. To come into God's light, to have dark clouds of error rolled away, means that one has given oneself wholly to Jesus, that one means to try to follow His steps. And so the "way of righteousness" means the living *in* Christ and *for* Christ. Those who walk along this way little by little come to believe with all their hearts the truths the Church teaches them. They find the Creed is a short setting forth of truths which they must live. That, I suppose, is what St. John means by "doing the truth." Am I walking in the way of righteousness? That is, simply, have I put God first in my life? Have I prayed Him to make me share in Christ's life? It is not difficult to answer. Am I gentler, kinder, stricter with myself, more careful about honesty, purity? Do I pray more? are my Communions very much to me?

God clears away errors from the minds of those who are His; but there is a state of error which one must be delivered from before one can walk in His ways. And I must remember that God's light, that the blessed Lord's presence, that the truths I repeat in the Creed, are for this end, for this purpose.

To make us holy. Have I ever thought how blessed a life it is to walk in the way of righteousness?

To have this one wish, to please God, makes one's life so simple. Every joy and every sorrow are made holy, because one takes each thing from Him.

It is the "way of peace."

But one cannot have this peace all at once; one has to struggle with sin, and one's errors often hinder one. But if I feel I have hardly begun at all, or that I am discouraged, let me take courage. It is the living Lord Who gives me strength and light.

"Abide with us, and let Thy light
Shine, Lord, on every heart;
Dispel the darkness of our night,
And joy to all impart." (178.)

Thought III.

"Grant unto all them that are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion."

Text.—"Ye are fellowcitizens with the saint, and of the household of God" (Eph. ii. 19).

The fellowship, the oneness, the communion. Do I take home to myself that I belong to a great company of people who are *one* in Christ?

"We are very (that is really) members incorporate (that means taken into the body) in the mystical body of Thy Son, which is the blessed company of all faithful people." That is what Christ's religion means.

We are not to be "saved" all by ourselves, and live in the world a number of scattered people. No, Christians are to be a holy fellowship; they are the Church, the body of Christ.

Sometimes people who are imperfectly taught think that a Christian may come to Christ, and then look about and see what particular set of believers will suit him. That is not the way Jesus Christ showed us, not the way His Apostles preached. It was only by coming into the oneness, the fellowship, only by being made a member of Christ's body, that salvation could be laid hold of.

The Church of God seems indeed to be rent, but there is a deep spiritual unity which unites those who hold the faith. If I am at all troubled as to whether I belong to the Church, the fellowship, I need only ask, Has my branch of the Church the ministry, the Sacraments?

This holy fellowship is not complete here on earth, for there are also those who rest in Paradise, but who are one with us in Jesus our Head.

Christ means this holy fellowship, this Church, to act on the world; or, rather, it is Christ Who through the Church acts on the world.

Do I realize this glorious life? I, however poor, unlearned, imperfect I am, belong, if I have been admitted by holy Baptism, to this fellowship. If I have fallen into sin, I may come and hear the word of Christ's forgiveness given me by the minister, who represents the whole Church.

I am weak: there is Christ's blessed Body and Blood to strengthen and refresh me. I need instruction: there is the Bible, the "divine library of the Church"; there is the ministry of preaching.

And besides all this, there ought to be a deep, true love between the members of the Body. Do I care for those who share the Church's life with me? Do I long for more people to be gathered into that great household of God? Do I think of and pray for the blessed dead as one with us in Him Who is our Head.

"One family, we dwell in Him,
One Church, above, beneath;
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death." (221.)

Thought IV.

"That they may eschew those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same."

Text.—"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (this week's Epistle, 1 St. Pet. ii. 11).

Our Baptism represents to us our profession—what we are called on to do, which is, as the service for Baptism teaches us, to follow Christ.

A man's ordinary calling is often termed his profession, and he is careful, if he wants to do well in it, to study it. So our life-long profession is to be Christians; and we pray God to help us to eschew—that is to avoid—things which are exactly opposite to what a Christian should do.

Sometimes people who are very honest about themselves say, "I won't be confirmed," or, "I won't go to Communion; I know I shan't live up to it," meaning they would act contrary to what they had professed. (It's a sad mistake, an "error," for in Confirmation and in Communion we receive gifts of strength, cleansing, life, and no Christian can refuse these gifts without peril.) But do I look on myself as "dedicated," given to Christ, because I am baptized? This week's Epistle teaches me what a Christian should avoid, and what a Christian should do. "Following those things which are agreeable to the same" means, do the actions which are becoming to our Christian profession.

What are the things against which a Christian should guard?

Fleshly lusts, "the sinful lusts of the flesh" which I promised to give up when I was baptized. St. Peter tells us that these do hurt, fight against the soul; that is, they kill, if we yield to them, the life of the soul.

Greediness, over-much eating, eating for eating's sake, the horrid practices of having huge feeds at certain times of the year, destroy people's souls. Rich people and poor people are equally tempted.

Drink. Surely I know what yielding to the lust of drink will do.

And impurity. I need not dwell on the utter misery which follows this sin.

But one must guard oneself. To check beginnings of such sins in oneself or others is wise.

To teach children not to waste money on sweets may help them to check desires for drink hereafter.

I should guard myself and others from anything like drinking at all sorts of odd times. I should guard myself and others from thinking it needful to drink brandy or wine when one feels "low."

Then with regard to other sins of the body. I should grow to know that it does not suit a Christian profession to be very loud, familiar, to talk of sin, to think lightly of sin, to read bad books, and so on. But, after all, it is by doing the things which suit our Christian life that one best avoids the contrary.

It is by gentleness, temperance, modesty, submission to those set over us in the Lord, that little by little we come to know the perfect freedom of God's blessed service on which we entered in our Baptism.

"Jesu, meek and gentle,
Son of God most high,

Pitying, loving Saviour,
Hear Thy children's cry.

"Pardon our offences,
Loose our captive chains,
Break down every idol
Which our soul detains.

"Give us holy freedom,
Fill our hearts with love,
Draw us, Holy Jesus,
To the realms above.

"Lead us on our journey,
Be Thyself the Way
Through terrestrial darkness
To celestial day.

"Jesu, meek and gentle,
Son of God most high,
Pitying, loving Saviour,
Hear Thy children's cry." (194.)

THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

The Collect.

O Almighty God, Who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men; grant unto Thy people, that they may love the thing which Thou commandest, and desire that which Thou dost promise; that so, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"O Almighty God, Who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men."

Text.—"The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God" (St. James i. 20, from the Epistle for this week).

This is a prayer which will often come to the lips of God's children as they find themselves beset, hindered, by men's unruly wills.

It is a great lesson which God teaches each one of us, that it is only He who can order men's wills.

I who read this, if I am trying to serve God at all, am sure to find myself brought up, as it were, short, checked by unruly wills.

My own first. I shall find my own will hindering me. I

shall, even in good things, have little by little to learn to make God's will my will. Perhaps I may find myself set on some plan, some way of life, or of doing work for God. And I may have to give it all up—and other people. Ah, it is one of the hard lessons God teaches us. The sins of men, their own unruly wills, unwillingness to give in to God, hinder their salvation. One sees people set on their own way. "It is not my way to set up to be religious"; "I will take my way; I will not be under anybody."

And these people become slaves of their own unruly wills. They grow into unlovely old age, ill-tempered, soured, perhaps unable to raise their minds into thoughts of that other life towards which they are hastening.

And men's unruly wills stir up strife, opposition to goodness. Sometimes one finds work for God hindered by the way men set themselves against it.

And we know people have thought fit to disturb Christian worship by brawling and blaspheming.

And now and then one finds in one's own life that religion and goodness are hated by people with whom one has to do. It may be that a Christian has to bear actual dislike, unpopularity, to bear being sworn at, because he or she is known to go to church, to be a communicant, to have returned to the faith of Christ.

If any of these things come to me, this prayer will help me. It is better, if one has to bear men's unruly wills and affections, their love for their own way, and so on, to be gentle, even if one has to oppose, always remembering the verse which begins the thought for to-day.

"Lord of our life, and God of our salvation,
Star of our night, and Hope of every nation,
Hear and receive Thy Church's supplication,
Lord God Almighty.

"See round Thine ark the hungry billows curling;
See how Thy foes their banners are unfurling;
Lord, while their darts envenomed they are hurling,
Thou canst preserve us.

"Lord, Thou canst help when earthly armour faileth,
Lord, Thou canst save when deadly sin assaileth,
Lord, o'er Thy Church nor death nor hell prevaileth;
Grant us Thy peace, Lord.

"Grant us Thy help till foes are backward driven;
Grant them Thy truth, that they may be forgiven;
Grant peace on earth, and, after we have striven,
Peace in Thy Heaven. Amen." (214.)

Thought II.

"Grant unto Thy people, that they may love the thing which Thou commandest."

Text.—"For I love Thy commandments above gold and precious stone" (Ps. cxix. 127).

To *love* God's commandments. Is that always easy? Perhaps at the time of one's turning to God, when one is confirmed, or one has made one's first Communion, or God has led one in some special way, it seems as if it would be so easy to be a Christian. And by degrees one finds what being a Christian means, and God's commandments do not seem quite easy and pleasant. To forgive one's friends when they have offended one, to forgive one's enemies when they have done one harm, is that a thing one loves? Yet the Lord Jesus commands us to do so. Is it always a pleasant thing to get up early for one's Communion, or to say one's prayers and read one's Bible?—is that always what one likes?—to keep from horrid little bits of self indulgence in food or drink, foolish or even impure talk, and so on?

Yet all these are what one has to do. And at first it is all struggle, all fight. Slowly, slowly, but most surely, one grows to love what is right. God's commandments are not grievous, as St. John tells us in that Epistle, which I should read over and over again. No; by degrees, as God grants the prayer which was prayed over us all at our Confirmation—"that we may daily increase in the Holy Spirit"—one comes to feel how God's service is perfect freedom; that—as the old Latin words which are the motto for this book mean—to serve God is to reign. Yes, to rule over all our sinful desires, our wills, not to be the slaves of any wicked habit, to have the power of checking one's evil temper, one's idle tongue, one's wandering thoughts. As God gives us this power, so He will give us that real love for His commandments. Do I hope, do I pray for this love of pleasing Him, of liking to do what He commands? If so, He will lead me on. Slowly, but quite surely, I shall grow to love His commandments. And He will lead me on to know that Christian life is positive, not negative. That is, it is not so much Do *not* do so and so; but Do this, be this; be gentle, meek, pure; do the truth, do kind deeds, love the brethren (which in the New Testament always means our fellow-Christians), and so on.

Very likely I may feel I like many things much better than God's service. But, if I want to be His, if I have come to the Lord Jesus for forgiveness, He will by degrees lead me to love His service best. What can I do to-day to keep His commandments better?

"God made me for Himself, to serve Him here
With love's pure service, and in filial fear,
To show His praise, for Him to labour now,
Then see His glory where the Angels bow." (627.

Thought III.

"And desire that which Thou dost promise."

Text.—"I GIVE UNTO THEM ETERNAL LIFE; AND THEY SHALL NEVER PERISH, AND NO ONE SHALL SNATCH THEM OUT OF MY HAND" (St. John x. 28).

God promises to us eternal life. This life begins now. So it is not only something hereafter, something after death which He will give, but now, here, God promises to us life. He promises us that in time, in His good time, He will bring us, yes, He will bring me, to be what He wants me to be. He will take my sinful nature, and little by little make it to be Christ's. And it is very needful one should pray that He will make one want this. I who read this, do I care at all for the things God promises? I do care, probably, for many other things—for fun, for money, for pleasures, for getting on. None of these are wrong, only, as the next Thought will tell me, they all pass away, and what God promises does not pass away. He may give me many good things, and He means His gifts of cleverness, or increased money, or marriage, to help me to grow in His gift of eternal life. He may take away some gift, some possession, because it is hindering, spoiling that life; but God's only promise is eternal life. He does promise, He does give it in this world, and He perfects it after this life is over. It is, so far as one knows, not much use thinking of heaven as a place where we shall be happy and enjoy ourselves, if we have not desired it here. Where God is, there is heaven; and unless the life of God begins here, one will not be either fit for, or able to enjoy Him hereafter. God will doubtless teach us, cleanse us (and especially those of us who have not had opportunities here) in the life beyond; but He does teach us that He means our eternal life to begin in this earthly life. Now one sees the force of this prayer.

That God will little by little teach us to wish for Himself. By degrees the good things of this world will fall into their proper place, and I shall want them not less, only I shall want God more. And I shall learn too to know that God does prepare for us a home, that He will wipe away our tears, that there is a rest for the people of God. Yes, but all these begin here. We have a home in His Church; even here He wipes away our tears, even here He gives His people rest. It may seem hard now to lift oneself up to such thoughts, to really want God, and what He promises most; but if I pray this prayer, or such a prayer, if I try to put Him first, I shall find I am *growing* in Christian life; and the sign of all life is growth.

"O sweet and blessed country,
The home of God's elect!
O sweet and blessed country,
That eager hearts expect!

"Jesu, in mercy bring us
To that dear land of rest;
Who art, with God the Father
And Spirit, ever blest." (225.)

Thought IV.

"That so, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Text.—"Your joy no man taketh from you" (St. John xvi. 22).

This is the word which tells us *why* God teaches us to put Him first. The world, and all that is in it—all the joys, all the pleasures, yes, and the home love, all pass away. It is a terrible moment when first one sees some one—perhaps

a young, strong friend—pass into the other world. And even some change in one's life, the going away from home for the first time, leaving school, marriage, new work, all these are sundry or different changes, and these changes are manifold, many.

But God never changes ; years go on, and one finds the Gospel story has just the same power to touch people's hearts as it had a year, or a hundred years, or nineteen hundred years ago. I shall find, if I read the lives of God's people, whether they lived lately or long ago, that different as they are from each other in all sorts of ways, when they come to speak of our Lord, of His love, they have much the same story to tell.

And so it is a great blessing if God will hear this prayer, and will fix my heart where true joy, joy which no man taketh from us, is. Can I make this practical? Only in this way: by putting God first in my life now, trying to speak and do what He wills, little by little I shall grow to feel what His love is. Then the dark days come, some change which fills my life with sorrow. Then, behind it all, I shall know God is holding me, stretching out His hand to grasp mine. It is not that I shall not feel these sorrows, I shall ; but God will teach me to know what He means me to know—His love. As one grows in Christian life one finds one will turn to the life beyond with hope, with joy. When death comes to any one of God's children, those who are left behind can give him to God with unbroken trust. So by degrees, if God sees fit to give me a long life, I shall grow to feel, to know that I am really drawing nearer my true home—that home where, it may be, some I loved on earth already are, that place of rest, refreshment, light. If at this moment I who read this cannot feel as if these thoughts of the changes of the world, and the need to fix our hearts beyond, were real, I must not be discouraged. Life means

growth; if I am "in Christ," I shall grow up to Him in His time. It is those who have put off trying to serve God, when they could serve Him in happy days, who find the changes of the world shake them, and the sorrows of life crush them.

> "Brief life is here our portion,
> Brief sorrow, short-lived care;
> The life that knows no ending,
> The tearless life, is there." (225.)

THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

The Collect.

O Lord, from Whom all good things do come ; grant to us Thy humble servants, that by Thy holy inspiration we may think those things that be good, and by Thy merciful guiding may perform the same ; through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Thought I.

"O Lord, from Whom all good things do come."

Text.—"Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above" (St. James i. 17, from the Epistle for last week).

Have I learned this lesson—that all good things are God's gifts?

One is so inclined, especially when on is young, to think one is strong, and that one can get on by oneself, and that one's gifts, whatever they are, are one's own—one may be proud of them.

Little by little any one who is truly converted learns that God gives all, that nothing is one's own. Am I at all proud of any gift—good looks, cleverness, a good voice? (How often those who have the great gift of a voice to sing spoil that gift by pride and vanity !)

One by one all these gifts have to be brought to God, and one must ask Him to take back His own and make us use them as He wills.

But this Thought is an encouragement: all good things come from God. Therefore, whenever I see goodness, I may be very glad. People seem to be far from God, yet one finds unselfishness, readiness to give up even life, heroism—these things are from God, and comfort us concerning those who do not seem to be serving Him. And the thought leads one on to praise God for all the beauty, all the glorious sunsets, the sight of the sea, the sweetness of children, the patience of the sufferers, the gifts of lovely music, of poetry, of art, which He has given to us. All good things come of Him, and are meant to lead us to Him.

Let me try to think of this—to look out for the good things He sends; chiefly, indeed, His gifts of grace, but also all the things of beauty in the world. To look at a beautiful sunset will help me, as has been said.

"Now you know there is something more than dulness, decay, failure, sin; there is always a subtle and joyful mystery which can penetrate and triumph over these, which can, in an instant, make life stand still with awe or run over with gladness, which says to the soul what God said to Moses at the burning bush, 'Take off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground'" (Exod. iii. 5).[1]

"It was not then a poet's dream,
An idle vaunt of song,
Such as beneath the moon's soft gleam
On vacant fancies throng;

"Which bids us see in heaven and earth,
In all fair things around,
Strong yearnings for a blest new birth
With sinless glories crown'd;

[1] Congreve's *Christian Life a Response.*

"Which bids us hear, at each sweet pause
From care and want and toil,
When dewy eve her curtain draws
Over the day's turmoil;

"In the low chant of wakeful birds,
In the deep, weltering flood,
In whispering leaves, these solemn words—
'God made us all for good.'

"All true, all faultless, all in tune,
Creation's wondrous choir,
Opened in mystic unison
To last till time expire.

"And still it lasts: by day, by night,
With one consenting voice,
All hymn Thy glory, Lord, aright,
All worship and rejoice."

(*Christian Year.*)

Thought II.

"Grant to us Thy humble servants, that by Thy holy inspiration we may think those things that be good."

Text.—"A good man, out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things" (St. Matt. xii. 35).

Our Lord taught us in very solemn words that out of the heart proceedeth evil thoughts. He taught us the blessedness of purity of heart. And so we pray that He will breathe into us good thoughts.

Do I try to bring my thoughts under Christ's rule? How do I wish our Lord to answer this prayer? Surely, first, that He will inspire me with holy thoughts about Himself,

about His love,—that at holy times, such as Communion, or when I am saying my prayers, or am in church for Morning or Evening Prayer, He will put into my mind holy thoughts.

Not only at such times. This prayer means that we want God to breathe good thoughts into us at all times. When I am with others, that He will put good thoughts about them into my mind; that He will help me to chase away wrong thoughts by thoughts of Him, of His love; that He will help me never to dwell on people's unkindness, or on sin, especially sins of the flesh. I *must* think about something; God will help me to think of good things. But this gift of thinking about good things, like all other gifts, is to be *won* by ourselves. God will give me this gift, but I must take trouble. How? (1) Thinking about holy things every day, if only for five minutes; that is, simply meditation (this book is meant to help me in time to meditate without any book but the Bible). (2) Storing my mind with good things—Bible verses and hymns, but also with good books. If I can get to care for good poetry, I may be very thankful. (3) Not letting myself think of wrong things, praying for help *at once*.

All these are ways by which I may work *with* God, not against Him; but at any time, if I am assailed by evil thoughts, I must pray; good thoughts will be put into my heart about other people, about my power to help them; good thoughts about my prayers, about God's Word.

"New mercies, each returning day,
Hover around us while we pray;
New perils past, new sins forgiven,
New thoughts of God, new hopes of heaven." (4.)

Thought III.

"And by Thy merciful guiding may perform the same; through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Text.—"Be ye doers of the word" (St. James i. 22, from the Epistle).

Thinking rightly, thinking good thoughts, is very, very important. Our Lord has told us so.

Why? Because right thinking brings about right doing, right actions. It is impossible for any one who is defiled with inward sin to be really good. On the other hand, nothing is more dangerous than to get into a habit of thinking about good things and never trying to be good, to do good. Yet it is not very likely that *really* holy thoughts ever fail. What do fail are the idle castles one builds about oneself, of the good one would do if one were rich, and so on. If God puts holy thoughts, He will, by the Holy Spirit Who inspired those thoughts, guide me into doing good, into turning thought into action. For instance, God puts into my heart, perhaps at Holy Communion, a thought of how blessed it is to do something which is directly done for Him. Then He shows me, guides me to see that there is some one who would go to Holy Communion if I would take that person's place for an hour sometimes (it may be a mother who cannot leave her child); or I find some one who is ill, and longs for some one to come and read to him; or a child can be taught its prayers, a neighbour helped.

Good thoughts come into my heart of the joy of helping on God's kingdom; and I find there is some small pleasure which I can give up, and so I shall have money to offer God.

Good thoughts come into my heart about the purity Jesus Christ asks from us; and I find I must stand out

against a pleasure, a bad play, a wicked joke, a bad companion.

I think also it may be of the joy of worship. God inspires me with the thought of what Holy Communion is; and He guides me to see that by self-denial, getting up earlier, or giving up some amusement, I can come far, far more frequently.

God never puts a good thought into my heart without expecting it to bear fruit. But I must never be in a hurry, and I must never forget to pray that "He will guide me."

> "Only, O Lord, in Thy dear love
> Fit us for perfect rest above;
> And help us, this and every day,
> To live more nearly as we pray." (4.)

ASCENSION DAY

The Collect.

Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that like as we do believe Thy only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into the heavens; so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with Him continually dwell, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

Thought I.

Text.—"And raised us up with Him, and made us to sit with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus" (Eph. ii. 6).

The Collect for this day, which of all days leads us straight up to God, rather recalls the Collect for the fourth Sunday after Easter. "In heart and mind continually dwell" is not unlike "may surely there be fixed."

What can I learn from this Collect, from to-day's festival, on which I should think and pray for the next ten days? Surely this, that a Christian who wants to serve God, to love Jesus, to be guided by the Holy Spirit, is meant to be in heavenly places "now" in this life. That is for what this wonderful Collect prays. Not so much that Jesus Christ will come down to us, but that He will raise us up to Him. Surely this means that if God grants this prayer, and lifts us up into the heavenly places, He will teach us, will teach me, how to dwell continually with Jesus. Little by little, if I pray this Collect, or such a prayer as this, asking our Lord

to lift me up to Him, I shall come to think about people, about my work or those I love, on life and its interests, on money, and, above all, about *sin*, as Jesus Christ would have me think. If Jesus lifts me up, I shall *grow* to be gentle, pitiful to all, but I shall grow to hate sin—sin in myself, sin in the world. Those who are living always with Jesus grow to loathe sins of the flesh—impurity, drunkenness, rioting. If I *want* (and please God I *do* want) to live continually with Jesus, I shall find more and more that I cannot read books or go to places of amusement which treat sins of the flesh as jokes, as mere accidents. I shall grow to feel I must love those whom Jesus is raising to live with Him. I shall grow in longings for time to pray to God Who raised and exalted Jesus, and is raising us—will raise me.

And I shall grow to feel more and more the joy of worship.

But of this I will think to-morrow.

Let my thought be to-day that Jesus has ascended, that He is in heavenly places, and He wants His members, of whom I am one, to live even in this world a heavenly life. To do this does not mean that people must go out of the world. *I* may have to work among people who do not think of Jesus, yet, if I do my best, if I keep my tongue from bad words, if my hands are quick to do kind deeds, if I lift up my heart to Him in prayer, then I am beginning to live with Jesus.

"He has raised our human nature
On the clouds to God's right hand;
There we sit in heavenly places,
There with Him in glory stand:
Jesus reigns, adored by Angels;
Man with God is on the Throne
Mighty Lord, in Thine Ascension
We by faith behold our own." (148.)

Thought II.

We do not generally in this book have thoughts for Friday and Saturday: these days are left for preparation for Communion, or for a special bit of Bible teaching.

But Ascension-tide leads one to think of the Eucharist, so we will take two thoughts, and perhaps they may help us to see how the Eucharist is connected with the Ascension.

Text.—"Having then a great High Priest, Who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession" (Heb. iv. 14).

Let me read the Collect again.

We pray that we may ascend where the Lord is.

What is Jesus doing now? He, as the verse says, is our High Priest.

First, then, He is *offering*. One must not think that sacrifice means *death* only. We may offer sacrifices to God which contain no thought of death. And our Lord's offering is one which was partly made on earth, partly made in heaven.

The Lord made an offering on Calvary of which the sin offering of the Jews was a type. Now He is offering His life, and of this offering the peace offering of the Jews was a type. "The offering which He makes is His perfected human life."[1]

And our Lord is continually interceding for His members, and I am taught to believe that our Lord is praying for us, watching over us; and as He has brought us into union with God, so He will keep us in union with God. And again He blesses us continually with all blessings. This is

[1] These thoughts are taken from that most beautiful and inspiring book of Professor Milligan on the Ascension of our Lord.

our Lord's work—to offer, to pray and work for His people, to bless. But what the Lord is, that must the Church be. We, the Church, start from heaven, and the work of the Church is to represent Christ on earth.

And the Eucharist, the Holy Communion, is the great Christian sacrifice. In it the Church pleads Christ's offering, in it the Church offers the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. The Eucharist, as another great teacher points out, "must be put in one line with what Christ is doing in heaven."[1] The Lamb of God pleads for us what He once did on Calvary. In the Eucharist we are made to sit in heavenly places, for we are made one with Him Who ever liveth to make intercession for us.

So the thought for to-day is that in the Eucharist the Church is doing what the blessed Lord is doing in heaven, or rather that our worship on earth, our pleading, is brought into unity with what the Lord is pleading in heaven, with the worship perpetually offered in heaven. "May He Who for our redemption made Himself an advocate with the Father, be Himself the pleader for our iniquities, even Christ our Lord and eternal Redeemer."[2]

"Alleluia! sing to Jesus!
His the Sceptre, His the Throne;
Alleluia! His the triumph,
His the victory alone;
Hark! the songs of peaceful Sion
Thunder like a mighty flood;
Jesus out of every nation
Hath redeemed us by His blood.

"Alleluia! not as orphans
Are we left in sorrow now;
Alleluia! He is near us,
Faith believes, nor questions how:

[2] Dr. Bright's *Ancient Collects.*

Though the cloud from sight received Him,
When the forty days were o'er,
Shall our hearts forget His promise,
'I am with you evermore'?

"Alleluia! bread of angels,
Thou on earth our Food, our Stay;
Alleluia! here the sinful
Flee to Thee from day to day;
Intercessor, Friend of sinners,
Earth's Redeemer, plead for me,
Where the songs of all the sinless
Sweep across the crystal sea." (316.)

Thought III.

Text.—"Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 St. Pet. ii. 5).

Let me think to-day of the Church's work, of how she shares the Lord's high priestly work; for, all Christians are dedicated, set apart to be priests to God. Some have a greater degree of priesthood than others, and are God's ministers, *representing* the Church, but all Christians are priests. So the Church on earth is to show the life of Christ on earth. We must each of us offer our lives, our souls and bodies to God. That is what we do in the prayer after Holy Communion, and what we are to do each and every day. Christ is in us; therefore His love, His Spirit's gifts, are to be shown in us.

But, again, the Church has to offer worship. Do I feel I must worship God? If so, I shall come to see that in the Eucharist the Church gathers up all her worship and pours it forth before God.

Do I try to enter into this? Little by little, if I ask Him, God will teach me to enter into this fulness of sacrifice, of offering to God a consecrated life in which worship and work both have their part. If I miss my part, if in the place where God has put me I am not living this life of service, I am hindering God's purpose; the body of Christ, the Church, is being hurt by me; for the work of the Church is hindered. Our Lord is dishonoured, not so much by the wickedness and opposition of people who are not Christians as by the faults and sins and lack of love of Christians. Do I ever think that it is the special business of clergymen, and perhaps of a few women who have nothing else to do, to be religious? If so, then I am utterly failing to understand the meaning of the Ascension, the meaning and purpose of the Church of God, the meaning of the holy Eucharist. But if the Holy Spirit which was poured on me at my Confirmation, to, as it were, anoint me for my office, leads me to feel that I am one of a great body of faithful people who are priests unto God, I shall little by little grow in the knowledge of the joy of service. My work—it may be common household duties, or it may be toilsome labour, or it may be the work of bearing sickness will be offered up to God and hallowed by prayer.

I shall get to see how prayer for others is a part of the work of consecrated lives of the priestly Church. I shall enter more into the joy of united worship in the Eucharist which raises us up to heaven. I shall come to see how the sins of a Christian are sins against the whole Church as well as against God, and how the Church, represented by a special minister, absolves him. And I shall come to see that every Christian, in his or her degree, is a missionary, and must care for the spread of the kingdom. Finally, God will teach me how united the Church on earth is with the Church at rest. These are some of the lessons of the Ascension.

May the ascended Lord teach them to me by His Spirit.

"Alleluia! King eternal,
Thee the Lord of lords we own;
Alleluia! born of Mary,
Earth Thy footstool, Heaven Thy throne:
Thou within the veil hast entered,
Robed in flesh, our great High Priest;
Thou on earth both Priest and Victim
In the Eucharistic feast.

"Alleluia! sing to Jesus!
His the Sceptre, His the Throne;
Alleluia! His the triumph,
His the victory alone;
Hark! the songs of peaceful Sion
Thunder like a mighty flood;
Jesus out of every nation
Hath redeemed us by His blood." (316.)

SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION DAY

The Collect.

O God the King of glory, Who hast exalted Thine only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph unto Thy kingdom in heaven; we beseech Thee, leave us not comfortless; but send to us Thine Holy Ghost to comfort us, and exalt us unto the same place whither our Saviour Christ is gone before, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

Thought I.

For this week let our thoughts be fixed again on the Ascension, and on the gift the Lord sends to His Church.

Text.—"Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in" (Ps. xxiv. 7).

I cannot dwell too much on the Ascension of the Lord, for it completes the Lord's Incarnation. He has taken our human nature into heaven; He is in heaven as God and Man. Does this help me in my struggling life? Yes, for because Jesus has ascended, because Jesus is with His Father, we know we, His members, shall be there too. It is right to think of this great hope. Sometimes life is terribly sad, and sin is so horrible, and one fails. Then the thought of Jesus Christ in heaven, one with us, preparing a place for each of us, preparing us for that place, will cheer

one. I must think of the Lord as always caring for His Church, for each one of us, "standing" by us as He stood by St. Paul, to cheer us; coming to us in the blessed Sacrament, which does indeed unite earth and heaven.

By degrees God teaches His children the meaning of each article of the Christian faith. There is not one article which does not bear upon daily life, and "ascended into heaven" is full of teaching for my life. Surely it teaches me to live a heavenly life now, because that dear Saviour is in heaven, showering gifts on us, always our great High Priest. And the Ascension is full of joy. By degrees I must come to know this joy. There does come to those who are trying to serve God, who have laid themselves and their sins at the foot of the Cross, joy; and at no time more than at Easter and Ascension. It is good for us, for me, sometimes to try and enter into what worship means—to kneel in church at the Eucharist, and try and "lift up our hearts"—simply to let our hearts go out to God in utter adoration for all He has done.

At Ascension time, now, to-day, let me pray God to give me this holy joy. Christ is now, this moment, pleading His work before the Father; Christ is thinking of me.

Christ is in glory; He wills to bring me where He is when I am ready.

The Ascension of the Lord is the ladder which unites heaven to earth; let me never think any more of heaven and God being far away. Heaven is about us, we are brought into heavenly places, we are His body, the "fulness of Him that filleth all in all."

Instead of a hymn, let me read the "Proper Preface" in the Communion Service.

"Through Thy most dearly beloved Son Jesus Christ our Lord; Who after His most glorious Resurrection manifestly appeared to all His Apostles, and in their sight ascended up

into heaven to prepare a place for us; that where He is thither we might also ascend, and reign with Him in glory. Therefore with angels, etc.

Thought II.

"We beseech Thee, leave us not comfortless; but send us Thy Holy Ghost to comfort us."

Text.—"And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may be with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth" (St. John xiv. 16).

These next words teach us a great truth, that it is the work of the Holy Ghost to teach us, to raise us, to comfort us, to exalt us.

The Lord Jesus told His Apostles to wait for the gift of the Spirit, and in the Spirit and through the Spirit the Church has gone on, has grown, has lived.

All through the New Testament we are taught that all our gifts and all the grace God sends us are brought to us by the Holy Spirit. We are to be "filled" with the Spirit.

It is the Holy Ghost Who makes all the Sacraments to be means of grace.

And I ought to think of this. The Holy Spirit given to us is the Holy Spirit as He is in Christ; that is, the Holy Spirit as He dwells in Christ is poured out on us, so that we receive "the Spirit of Jesus." God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, all work for "us and for our salvation."[1] So that when we receive the Holy Spirit, we receive the life of Jesus. And this is what St. Paul teaches us when he speaks of Christ being formed in our hearts. We are to be

[1] I am again indebted to Professor Milligan's valuable book, *The Ascension*, for what I have tried to say.

"in Christ." And I must never doubt the reality of the Spirit's coming to me. He comes in Baptism, in Confirmation, and again and again. What I have to do is to use His gift; the Collect reminds me for what purpose. He comes to comfort, to exalt, to make me a full-grown Christian.

One more thought. The Holy Spirit of the Lord is given to Christ's members only; only in and through the Church, which is His body.[1] For the Church is not put in the place of Jesus Christ, but in the Church we are brought into relation, into touch, with Him our Head.

The words that follow are given to us by a holy man of blessed memory,[2] who is now in Paradise:

"There is no proof that the higher influences of the Spirit are given except to those, and therefore through those, whom the Redeemer has called to a saving knowledge of Himself. The Church of God is His Spirit-giving Body . . . Only through her they who sit in darkness receive the light of life."

"O Saviour, Who for man hast trod
The winepress of the wrath of God,
Ascend, and claim again on high
Thy glory left for us to die.

"A radiant cloud is now Thy seat,
And earth lies stretched beneath Thy Feet;
Ten thousand thousands round Thee sing,
And share the triumph of their King.

"The Angel-host enraptured waits:
'Lift up your heads, eternal gates!'

[1] See Milligan on *The Ascension*, pp. 221, 222, 223, which should be carefully read by any one who needs instruction about the Church's mission.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 223.

O God-and-Man ! the Father's Throne
Is now for evermore Thine own.

"Our great High Priest and Shepherd Thou
Within the veil art entered now,
To offer there Thy precious Blood
Once poured on earth a cleansing flood." (146.)

THOUGHT III.

"Thine Holy Ghost to comfort us, and exalt us unto the same place whither our Saviour Christ is gone before."

Text.—"THAT WHERE I AM, THERE YE MAY BE ALSO" (St. John xiv. 3).

The Holy Ghost the Comforter, or, as the word is translated in several places, Advocate.

The Greek word means much more than simply soothing or pitying. To comfort means to encourage. That is what I need. I should, if I am turned to God, if I am a baptized, confirmed Christian, *go on*. I must not stand still (indeed I cannot). I must be *encouraged* that I may encourage others ; not a weak Christian, who is afraid to say he believes in Christ, afraid to be seen going to church, to Communion ; afraid to own he says his prayers, or that he uses confession. No ; but one who thankfully uses the gifts poured on us in the Church, and who is brave. Brave Christians are needed — Christians who are not afraid to witness against swearing, drinking, sins of the flesh. Men and women, boys and girls, all need this "encouragement."

It needs encouragement, the "comfort" of the Holy Spirit, to make one able to go on doing the same thing over and over again—our daily work, perhaps a bit of work for God. And it needs His comfort to make one willing to begin again after a fall into sin, a loss of temper, neglect of

prayer, perhaps something which is worse. And His comfort makes us patient with other people's faults, patient with them if they do not see things as we do.

"And to exalt us." Ah, that is what we thought of before. Leading the heavenly life here. "With Him continually dwell." Does this seem impossible? Oh, it is not—not if Jesus gives us His own life, as He does. I, who read this, am perhaps very busy, very little helped (perhaps hindered) by my surroundings; but I can, if I will, take the things that hinder me and spread them all out before Jesus, and He will turn all hindrances into helps. If I will turn to Him often—try, as it were, to be always living with Jesus more and more—I shall sit in the heavenly places with Christ Jesus; more and more I shall find myself raised up to where He is, even here.

"And thence the Church, Thy chosen Bride,
With countless gifts of grace supplied,
Through all her members draws from Thee
Her hidden life of sanctity.

"O Christ, our Lord, of Thy dear care
Thy lowly members heavenward bear;
Be ours with Thee to suffer pain,
With Thee for evermore to reign.

"All praise from every heart and tongue
To Thee, ascended Lord, be sung;
All praise to God the Father be,
And Holy Ghost eternally. Amen." (146.)

WHIT SUNDAY

The Collect.

God, Who as at this time didst teach the hearts of Thy faithful people, by the sending to them the light of Thy Holy Spirit; grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgement in all things, and evermore to rejoice in His holy comfort; through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

Thought I.

"God, Who at this time didst teach the hearts of Thy faithful people."

Text.—"The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost" (from the Gospel).

These first words of the Collect are a burst of praise.

This day is the birthday of the Church.

Now man is joined to God, Jesus Christ has ascended, and "is receiving gifts for men."

But, as I read these words, does any thought of praise arise in my heart? Is it any real joy to me that the Church of God had its birthday to-day? Do I feel that it means anything to me? Perhaps not very much; but God the Holy Ghost will teach me if I ask Him. I can, if I think a little, see what a difference the Christian Church has made to the world—is making. It is the Holy Ghost who has taught

and has dwelt in Christians all through the ages. Christians have been brave, humble, pure. The Christian Church has been the "home of the lonely" since the first great Whit Sunday. If I know it is a good thing that there are hospitals, schools for orphans, that there are men and women who are willing to give their money and time and gifts to help to amuse, to teach, to relieve their brothers and sisters, let me remember all these things had their beginnings in the Christian Church, and were taught by the Holy Ghost.

But, more than these: if God has taught me to be glad that there are good people, holy souls in every age, then I must thank Him for to-day; for it is in the Church of God and through the indwelling and teaching of the Holy Spirit that these have been made holy. Let me pray to God to make me thankful; let me praise Him, especially in the great Eucharistic Service. If I want to make this great truth of the Creed, "I believe in the Holy Ghost," a reality, the blessed Comforter will Himself teach me.

"Joy! because the circling year
Brings our day of blessings here,
Day when first the light Divine
On the Church began to shine.

"Like to quivering tongues of flame
Unto each the Spirit came,
Tongues, that earth might hear their call,
Fire, that love might burn in all.

"So the wondrous works of God
Wondrously were spread abroad;
Every tribe's familiar tone
Made the glorious marvel known.

"Hardened scoffers vainly jeered;
Listening strangers heard and feared,

Knew the prophet's word fulfilled,
Owned the work which God had willed.

"Still Thy Spirit's fulness, Lord,
On Thy waiting Church be poured;
Grant our burdened hearts release;
Grant us Thine abiding peace." (153.)

THOUGHT II.

"By the sending to them the light of Thy Holy Spirit."

Text.—"TO GIVE LIGHT TO THEM THAT SIT IN DARKNESS" (from the hymn in Morning Prayer called the Benedictus, St. Luke i. 79).

The Holy Ghost is often called the Illuminator; that is, one who gives light. He gives light, and fire, and love. Light is the first gift which the Church needed, which every Christian needs, which the world needs.

Sin is very often spoken of as darkness, and the blessed Spirit came to the first Christians, and by His light showed them the horror of sin, the beauty of holiness; and so it happens now to each Christian, to the whole Church. "He that followeth Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life," says our Lord. If I read the Epistles, I shall see how full of light the Church grew to be. And so it is now. The Holy Ghost illuminates the Church, illuminates each Christian. It is awful to see any one who lives in sin, that is to say, who is in a state of sin. It may be quite a respectable person, who has shut out the Holy Spirit by love of money, by giving way to pride, so that he is utterly dark in his mind. He does not *see* the misery of getting fond of money and of shutting out the joy of giving. And so it is with people who give way to unbelief, or lust, or drink: their souls get quite dark.

But if, by God's mercy, the light bursts on their souls, then they see. It is the first work of the blessed Spirit to show us that we are sinners. And all Christians must go on praying. He will teach them, will teach the Church, when there is wrong. Do I pray God to teach me, to give me light? If He has shown me my sins and my Saviour, still I must go on praying for more light. We don't see clearly enough very often. I need light. Perhaps I don't see some fault which is between my soul and God, or some duty which lies straight before me; or perhaps some bit of God's truth is not clear. I do not grasp the full meaning of the Creed or the Lord's Prayer (I never shall grasp the whole in this life), and I need the light of the Holy Spirit. And the whole Church needs the Holy Spirit's light. Sometimes the Church does not see clearly about certain duties, certain calls God makes on her.

There must be a continual prayer for light; for as plants cannot grow without light, no more can souls who are as trees planted in the garden of the Lord.

"Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,
And lighten with celestial fire;
Thou the anointing Spirit art,
Who dost Thy seven-fold gifts impart:

"Thy blessèd unction from above
Is comfort, life, and fire of love;
Enable with perpetual light
The dulness of our blinded sight:

"Anoint and cheer our soilèd face
With the abundance of Thy grace:
Keep far our foes, give peace at home;
Where Thou art Guide no ill can come.

"Teach us to know the Father, Son,
And Thee, of Both, to be but One;

That through the ages all along
This may be our endless song,

"Praise to Thy eternal merit,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen." (157.)

THOUGHT III.

"Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgement in all things."

Text.—"WHEN HE, THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH, IS COME, HE SHALL GUIDE YOU INTO ALL THE TRUTH" (St. John xvi. 13).

This special prayer of to-day is meant for all Christians who have received the Holy Spirit, and are trying to serve God. It is a prayer for two great gifts—wisdom, counsel.

To have a "right judgment." That is, to see, to know what is good to do, and also what is prudent, what is fitting to do and to say. As I go on I shall have to make up my mind about many things, and the Holy Spirit of Jesus will help me. There may be the question of marriage, there may be the question of what sort of work or trade I shall take up, where I shall live, and all sorts of questions come before a Christian.

There are great matters of faith and doctrine and morals, about which there can be no question; but outside all these a Christian has many questions. A man has to vote (a woman too for certain things). Can there be anything for which one should ask for a right judgment more than for this? (If I have any votes, or if I can influence any one who does vote for Parliament, for School Board, for Guardians of the Poor, County Councils, I can do a real work for God if I take home to myself what a responsibility the power of voting is, and pray for right judgment to be given to voters. Again, I must, as

I grow up, have a judgment, an opinion, about temperance —whether *I* should be a total abstainer or not. Then, as I grow up, I shall have to judge for myself and for others about what amusements are right, about betting, theatres, and so on. If I have anything to do with children, I want a right judgment to know when to reprove, when to punish, when to praise. I want a right judgment as to religious teaching of children. And if I need this, do I not see how the whole Church needs a right judgment—the particular branch of the Church to which I belong? Let me pray to God that a right judgment may be given through the Holy Ghost to the whole Church—that the whole Church may see what is right to do for religious education, for temperance work, for missions, and, perhaps most of all, for healing divisions among Christians, especially among ourselves.

And lastly, if ever I am puzzled what to do or say, how to make up my mind, let me send up this short prayer: "O God the Holy Ghost, grant me a right judgment"; that is, that I may choose the right thing, the right cause.

"Spirit of mercy, truth, and love,
O shed Thine influence from above;
And still from age to age convey
The wonders of this sacred day.

"In every clime, by every tongue,
Be God's surpassing glory sung;
Let all the listening earth be taught
The acts our great Redeemer wrought.

"Unfailing Comfort, Heavenly Guide,
Still o'er Thy holy Church preside;
Still let mankind Thy blessings prove,
Spirit of mercy, truth, and love." (155.)

Thought IV.

"And evermore to rejoice in His holy comfort."

Text.—"The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh. viii. 10).

Christian life should lead to joy—that joy which is one of the fruits of the Spirit.

There is so much joy in the Christian life. How do we, how shall I, come to that joy? Through the Holy Ghost. Bit by bit, very slowly, after many falls, after many struggles, after many fights with my own self will, God will teach me, if I will go on trying, to give myself entirely to Him; His will will become my will. Then more and more I shall grow to know what is the joy which no one can take away from Christ's people. Perhaps I know a little of that joy now. Has God ever let me do something for Him? Has He ever accepted a piece of self-denial? Can there be anything which brings more joy than to be able to know one has pleased God? That joy comes in very simple ways. Then again, slowly in some cases, quickly in others, the joy of God's forgiveness comes, the joy of feeling Him all round one, of knowing that He hears one's prayers, that one can take all one's troubles to Him, that when a pleasure comes in one's way one can thank Him quite simply for it. The joy comes too of knowing that really and truly one would not wilfully sin against Him; and He gives one joy in His worship, joy in His most blessed Sacrament, His holy word, as one reads it on one's knees, brings joy —rejoicing in the holy comfort, the encouragement, given to us. Yes, it is *encouragement*. God is so good; He does strengthen us by encouraging us.

And this rejoicing is meant to help us to serve Him better.

Nothing can witness for Christ so well as the daily life of an *encouraged* Christian—one who is not afraid; one who bears small vexations, disappointments, almost with a laugh.

A Christian who is joyful can be merry and full of fun because he or she is like a child, always in the sight of a loving Father, whose love keeps the merriment and fun always holy, pure, modest. A joyful Christian is strong, not afraid of being laughed at, not afraid to trust God.

This rejoicing will come if I will pray. There is no life which brings one real joy except the life of a Christian; but the rejoicing does not always, though it does sometimes, seem easy.

What can I do now, this Whitsuntide, to make this thought of joy bear fruit?

Little beginnings are worth much. Can I be more cheerful? Can I look more on the bright side? Can I be braver to fight against some one temptation—it may be to self-indulgence, temper, idleness? "The joy of the Lord is *my* strength."

"Jesus, our only joy be Thou,
As Thou our Prize wilt be;
In Thee be all our glory now,
And through eternity." (178.)

TRINITY SUNDAY

The Collect.

Almighty and everlasting God, Who hast given unto us Thy servants grace by the confession of a true faith to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of the Divine Majesty to worship the Unity; we beseech Thee, that Thou wouldest keep us stedfast in this faith, and evermore defend us from all adversities, Who livest and reignest, one God, world without end. Amen.

Thought I.

"Almighty and everlasting God, Who hast given unto us Thy servants grace by the confession of a true faith to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity."

Text.—"We speak that we do know, and bear witness of that we have seen" (St. John iii. 11, from the Gospel).

This is a burst of thanksgiving to God for His great love in letting us, His redeemed, know His nature, what He is.

Little by little, slowly, God taught, first the Jews, then the Christian Church, the full truth—Three in One, One in Three. We do not in the least understand this; it is a great mystery. We are like children on the shores of a mighty ocean; we cannot enter into the depths of the nature of God. Yet in His love He tells us there is the Father,

Who becomes our Father; there is the blessed Lord, Who is our Elder Brother, in Whom we are the Father's children; there is the Holy Spirit, Who makes the children dwelling-places—temples for God to dwell in.

Is this too hard for me? Do I feel as if to-day's Collect was unreal, as if it had nothing to do with my life? But God the Holy Ghost will teach me, if only I will ask Him, that this "true faith" has everything to do with my life. I perhaps think there is the Father in heaven; that's enough. Then what is to become of me? I am a sinner—how can the Father look on *me*? So I see my need of Jesus. But then our Lord saves us from our sins, and we need the Holy Spirit.

Don't let me ever think the glorious truth—"God in Three Persons, blessed Trinity"—is a bit of teaching added on. It is the full truth, the faith, without which, little by little, we shall find it hard to believe in God at all. God from all eternity is Trinity in unity. I must not—I who am busy, perhaps not able to read many books—perplex myself by arguments. Let me on my knees thank God for the glorious truth which to-day's festival sums up, and join in this Proper Preface, which I can read instead of a hymn:

"Who art one God, one Lord; not one only Person, but three Persons in one Substance. For that which we believe of the glory of the Father, the same we believe of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, without any difference or inequality. Therefore with Angels and Archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious Name; evermore praising Thee, and saying, Holy holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of Thy glory: Glory be to Thee, O Lord most High. Amen."

—*The Preface and the Hymn in the Office for the Holy Communion.*

Thought II.

"And in the power of the Divine Majesty to worship the Unity."

Text.—"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, which was, and which is, and which is to come" (Rev. iv. 8).

Yesterday I thought of the blessed Trinity, how the Three Persons, the Father, Son, Holy Ghost, are revealed, made known to us; of the wonderful glory of God in each; how each holy Person works for the redeemed Church, for each member of Christ's Body.

And to-day I must think of worship and of unity.

Let me take *unity* first. God is One. What the Father does, the Son does, the Holy Ghost does; so that when I read of God dwelling—abiding—in the Christian, it really means God the holy Trinity. At the Holy Communion we worship, we adore God the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost. I cannot understand this, I can only adore. But let me take this for certain, that every year those who live the life of prayer, Communion, thinking—that is, *meditating*—over the different parts of God's revelation (not taking stray texts, but taking what the Church puts before us) will, little by little, grow to feel Trinity Sunday is a day which makes them content to simply worship God.

Worship. Do I understand this at all? If I go to Church, is it simply to "get some good"? Is my idea of the blessed Sacrament of the altar that if I go I shall get some good?

That is not really what God wants. He does indeed in His love give us far more "than we desire or deserve"; but He wants our praise, our thanks, our adoration.

The life of a Christian should be, can be, and is sometimes, one act of worship. Work done for Him, pleasures

enjoyed in Him, put by with gladness if so be they interfere with Him; friends loved because He sent them; sorrows borne for His sake, and borne by Him Who dwells in His servant; prayer often a joy, and at any rate always as great a need as bodily food; worship in church—especially the worship of the Eucharist—the greatest earthly joy; Holy Communion the greatest happiness one has, the gift of which one cannot really speak in words, the gift which becomes yearly more precious. The Bible comes to be the dearest book, thinking over bits of it becomes easier. Other Christians grow very dear to us. The lost, the wanderers, are prayed for, longed for. Missions at home and abroad are dear, because they are for His glory. And life, and death, things present, and things to come, never divide us from God, but only make His love nearer, more present to the soul. This is the life to which I am called. It is not too high, too hard—it is the life of pleasing God. Shall I not begin afresh to-day? Let me say this hymn of praise:

"Glory be to God on high, and in earth peace, good will towards men. We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee, we glorify Thee, we give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty.

"O Lord, the only-begotten Son Jesu Christ; O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Thou that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Thou that takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer. Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us.

"For Thou only art holy; Thou only art the Lord; Thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father."

—*From the Office for the Holy Communion.*

Thought III.

"We beseech Thee, that Thou wouldest keep us stedfast in this faith."

Text.—"Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Cor. xv. 58).

It is of all things most needful for Christians to pray for steadfastness, perseverance.

And these words for to-day mean that we pray God to keep us steadfast in this faith, in this knowledge of Him, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, which shows itself in our daily life, in church, out of it.

If God gives me sometimes glimpses of joy, if I see every now and then, or perhaps every day, how joyful His service is, let me pray to Him—almost, as it were, *passionately*—"And crown Thy gifts with strength to persevere."

Let me pray this prayer for others—for the newly confirmed, for my fellow-communicants, for all who have begun to put God first, which is the test of a true conversion.

It is a very real danger, this want of steadfastness. A Christian may have seemed full of life and faith, and then some change in his life comes. He (or she) goes to live in a place among people who do not worship, or put Him first, or possibly among people who do not hold the faith; and then it is too surely possible that this Christian, instead of using this change, these surroundings, as fresh opportunities for serving God, falls away, becomes unsteadfast, leaves off prayer, church, Communion, never reads his Bible, goes to places, says things, he once would have avoided—or she (the same sad story is true of boys and girls, of men and women). Why have they failed? Because they were not steadfast in the life of faith in God the Father, the Son, the

Holy Ghost. God ceased to be first, so He soon came to be pushed out of the life. Am I steadfast? Is there any *growth*?

"And now, O Father, mindful of the love
That bought us, once for all, on Calvary's Tree,
And having with us Him that pleads above,
We here present, we here spread forth to Thee
That only Offering perfect in Thine eyes,
The one true, pure, immortal Sacrifice.

"Look, Father, look on His Anointed Face,
And only look on us as found in Him;
Look not on our misusings of Thy grace,
Our prayer so languid, and our faith so dim;
For lo! between our sins and their reward
We set the Passion of Thy Son our Lord.

"And then for those, our dearest and our best,
By this prevailing Presence we appeal;
O fold them closer to Thy mercy's breast,
O do Thine utmost for their souls' true weal;
From tainting mischief keep them white and clear,
And crown Thy gifts with strength to persevere.

"And so we come; O draw us to Thy Feet,
Most patient Saviour, Who canst love us still;
And by this Food, so awful and so sweet,
Deliver us from every touch of ill:
In Thine own service make us glad and free,
And grant us never more to part with Thee." (322.)

Thought IV.

"And evermore defend us from all adversities, Who livest and reignest, one God, world without end. Amen."

Text.—"Be strong, and He shall establish your heart, all ye that put your trust in the Lord" (Ps. xxxi. 27).

What are adversities? Things which are against us. And the only things which are against us are those which turn us away from God. Sorrows need not be adversities; but it is very awful when one who is a Christian lets trouble shake his or her faith in the great love of God. When sorrows come, let me rest on God's great love. He is so great, so above us, so near us, surely I can believe He knows what is best. It would surely be a dreadful thing to think one understood all about God, when there is so much to puzzle one in the world. It is such a comfort to rest on Him and wait.

Again, trials to one's faith, or temptations, need not really be *adversities*. If, as I was thinking yesterday, changes come into one's life, and one has to face jeering, or invitations to do, say, see wrong things, or, what is harder, the company of really good people who do not hold the faith, and think one foolish, either because one goes to Communion, or because one believes in the fulness of the faith once delivered to the saints—all these things—if God clearly allows them, and I have not wilfully and without praying for guidance put myself into temptation—will not be adversities. I must pray about them. To be alone among people who are *not* Christians often throws a real disciple more on Jesus, makes Him or her value prayer, the Bible, and Holy Communion more. Sometimes attacks on one's faith, or on the Church's teaching, drive Christians

to ask themselves more closely why they believe, why they, for instance, use confession, or observe the rule of fasting Communion, why they care for missions. Attacks on the Church often make people more earnest, stir them up. So it has been with the whole Christian faith, with the Bible.

So let me pray God to keep me steadfast, and to defend me from all things which are adversities.

Let this week teach me the joy of praising God for what He is—"One God, world without end."

> "O Trinity, O Unity,
> Be present as we worship Thee;
> And with the songs that Angels sing
> Unite the hymns of praise we bring." (158.)

That is the best of steadfastness, becoming year by year a little more steadfast; caring more to please God, caring more for worship, and prayer, and all of which I read yesterday.

> "Three Persons praise we evermore,
> One only God our hearts adore;
> In Thy sure mercy ever kind
> May we our true protection find." (158.)

SAINT ANDREW'S DAY

The Collect.

Almighty God, who didst give such grace unto Thy holy Apostle Saint Andrew, that he readily obeyed the calling of Thy Son Jesus Christ, and followed Him without delay; grant unto us all, that we, being called by Thy holy Word, may forthwith give up ourselves obediently to fulfil Thy holy commandments; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Text.—"Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers. And He saith unto them, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed Him" (St. Matt. iv. 18–20).

St. Andrew had already, as St. John tells us in his Gospel, brought St. Peter to Jesus, so the two brothers already knew Jesus, and were ready, when the call came, to leave their home, their work, their gains, and follow Him. Our Lord called a certain number to do this; some He left in their homes—Lazarus, for instance, and the man out of whom our Lord cast devils. Others He called to a harder—yet more blessed life than the home one.

This is vocation. The Lord looks at each of His disciples and sees exactly the calling for which that disciple is

fitted. Yet the Collect prays that each of us may obey the call we each receive—to follow the way of God's commandments.

Each of us has a call to serve God as much as had St. Andrew. We were called in our Baptism, and by degrees we each take home to ourselves the fact that God is calling us. For God does deal with each soul one by one. There are two sides to our life in Christ—the life of a Christian. One is the corporate life, the life we all share in God's great family; the other side is the life we receive one by one from God.

These two sides are realized in the Holy Communion. We each receive the Body—the Blood "given for thee," "shed for thee," but we all join in offering, in pleading the great Sacrifice, in the sacrifice we offer of ourselves.

And so God deals with each soul, and sends it calls to a higher life. Such a call is Confirmation, or marriage, or a great sorrow, or a change in one's circumstances. And there are inner calls. A sermon may specially touch just one particular soul, something one reads in the Bible, some words spoken to one may come as a call to serve God better.

And sometimes God does send calls to those who are serving Him in their daily work to do more, to do work for Him.

It is a call when one finds such work as a Sunday-school class, or teaching a little child—one's own child or another person's—about God. Has such a call come to me? And there are people, men and women, who do leave all and go to work for God.

We often think of missionaries at this time. If I have not prayed for missions yet, let me feel this St. Andrew's Day to be a real call to desire to care for missions. It might happen to me to be called to such work, or to have some I love so honoured. It is by looking out for God's

calls in our daily life that one is always ready to obey His voice without delay.

"Jesus calls us; o'er the tumult
Of our life's wild, restless sea,
Day by day His sweet voice soundeth,
Saying, 'Christian, follow Me.'

"As of old Saint Andrew heard it
By the Galilean lake,
Turned from home, and toil, and kindred,
Leaving all for His dear sake;

"Jesus calls us from the worship
Of the vain world's golden store,
From each idol that would keep us,
Saying, 'Christian, love Me more.'

"In our joys and in our sorrows,
Days of toil and hours of ease,
Still He calls in cares and pleasures,
That we love Him more than these.

"Jesus calls us: by Thy mercies,
Saviour, make us hear Thy call,
Give our hearts to Thine obedience,
Serve and love Thee best of all." (403.)

SAINT THOMAS THE APOSTLE

The Collect.

Almighty and ever-living God, Who for the more confirmation of the faith didst suffer Thy holy Apostle Thomas to be doubtful in Thy Son's resurrection; grant us so perfectly, and without all doubt, to believe in Thy Son Jesus Christ, that our faith in Thy sight may never be reproved. Hear us, O Lord, through the same Jesus Christ, to Whom, with Thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and for evermore. Amen.

Text.—"Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (St. John xx. 29, the Gospel for to-day).

I must know the story of St. Thomas's tardy faith, and I read it again in to-day's Gospel.

The Collect thanks God for having, by the doubt of St. Thomas, confirmed the certainty of the Lord's resurrection. And if I study the Gospel story, I shall see how all the Apostles—and most of all St. Thomas—were by no means ready to believe just because they wished to believe. St. Thomas especially seems to have thought the news too good to be true.

And the prayer is that we may so believe in our risen Lord that our faith may never deserve reproof.

Faith in the risen Lord—what does it mean? Easter teaches me, but it is good for me to think of it to-day. It

means that my religion is belief in, obedience to, love for a risen Saviour — a Saviour who cares for me, and for Whom I care.

I may say the Creed every day, and think I believe that Jesus rose the third day ; but unless this belief alters my way of life, it is not a faith which will count for anything in God's sight.

Do I understand this? To one who really believes in a living Christ this world and all it brings of joy and sorrow is simply a school for teaching him or her Christ's lessons ; a battlefield for fighting Christ's battles ; a way in which the Christian follows Christ's footsteps, and where one can give one's life to Christ for Him to make one's sinful nature His nature. Now is this the least little bit real to me?

Do I think of our Lord in my daily life? Do I try at all to think what He wants me to say or do? Does the prayer "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" ever rise to my lips and from my heart? If so, then I have the beginning of a real living faith.

And, again, this living faith in Christ takes away one's trust in one's own goodness, one's respectability, or anything one does. He is the Lord who has done all for us— who does everything *in* us.

Do I know this?

Again, this living faith will help one to bear anything the Lord sends. If it is His will I should tread the way of sorrow, I must remember He trod it before me, and, like St. Thomas, I must be ready even to die with Him.

Now, this living faith is God's gift. It is shed abroad in our hearts by His Holy Spirit ; it is nourished by the means of grace, especially and chiefly by the blessed Sacrament. And though God gives us this gift, He expects us to use it, to work ourselves with Him. Our blessed Lord tells us in St. John's Gospel that those who do His will will come to

know His doctrine—that is, will come to know Him. So it is by trying to please Him in one's life that one comes, little by little, to that blessed assurance which makes us, like St. Thomas, cry out, "My Lord and my God."

"And we who know how true Thou art,
And Thee as God and Lord adore,
Give us, we pray, a loyal heart,
To trust and love Thee more and more." (404.)

THE CONVERSION OF SAINT PAUL

The Collect.

O God, Who, through the preaching of the blessed Apostle Saint Paul, hast caused the light of the Gospel to shine throughout the world; grant, we beseech Thee, that we, having his wonderful conversion in remembrance, may shew forth our thankfulness unto Thee for the same, by following the holy doctrine which he taught; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Text.—"Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an Apostle" (Rom. i. 1).

To-day we are taught to thank God for the conversion of St. Paul, and we pray we may follow his teaching. Do I at all know what a wonderful man St. Paul was? Do I realize all he is to the Church of God? St. Paul was especially the Apostle who taught (guided by the Holy Spirit) the oneness of all men in Christ. He taught how the law of Moses was a preparation for Christ, but that now Jews and Gentiles are one in Christ. Again, he taught that nations and Churches and single individuals were called out, "elected" to special and wonderful vocations—first the Jews, and now the Christian Church—and that these wonderful callings mean great responsibility.

Again, St. Paul taught that our Lord's death had made atonement for the sins of men, and that because we are baptized into Christ God will accept us, if we, on our part, answer to His grace and "walk in the Spirit."

Then St. Paul teaches us very wonderful things about the Church of Christ, and of the wonderful blessings each Christian may and should enjoy through the love of God. And from these great thoughts in each Epistle St. Paul is never tired of coming down to the very simplest and most every-day duties of the Christian life; he is always saying *Therefore*, because such great things are yours, you must "walk in love," or husbands and wives must love each other, and so on.

It is most interesting to see how often St. Paul says "*Therefore.*"

Then St. Paul, in his later Epistles to Timothy and Titus, has much to say about Church order. This is a short outline. Of course a great deal is left out; but let me notice one or two things. St. Paul argues very closely. He is not like St. John, who lays down great ideas as if he had *seen* them in the eternal wisdom of God. St. Paul is led by the Holy Spirit to argue out difficulties and questions.

So I must be very careful when I hear people arguing from single texts taken from any of the Epistles. No books of the Bible can stand this so badly as the Epistles of St. Paul. Terrible mistakes have been made by people who have argued from single texts. The Epistles are very difficult, especially one or two, and I must be careful when I hear people who are opposed to Church teaching arguing from them. (There are some excellent books explaining them, such as Canon Gore on the Romans and Ephesians.) No one who does not know Greek has any business to argue against Church teaching from the Epistles.

St. Paul is full of most beautiful and helpful thoughts about our blessings in Christ; but he never hints that it is possible to receive these blessings unless one is a member of Christ's Body, the Church; and he does not

hint at any other way of entering that Church except by Baptism.

He speaks strongly about the blessings of the Eucharist. I must not be afraid to read the Epistles; but if I feel puzzled, I must just put the passage by until I can get it explained. Romans vii. to ix. is a very puzzling passage until such a teacher as, say, Canon Gore explains it. But there are so many chapters which I can read over and over again, and pray over, and examine myself upon. I should get to know and thank God for Romans v., vi., viii.; 1 Corinthians x., xi., xii., xiii.; and the Epistles to the Ephesians and Philippians especially.

"We sing the glorious conquest
Before Damascus' gate,
When Saul, the Church's spoiler,
Came breathing threats and hate;
The ravening wolf rushed forward
Full early to the prey;
But lo! the Shepherd met him
And bound him fast to-day.

"Oh, glory most excelling
That smote across his path!
Oh, light that pierced and blinded
The zealot in his wrath!
Oh, voice that spake within him
The calm reproving word!
Oh, love that sought and held him
The bondman of his Lord!

"O Wisdom, ordering all things
In order strong and sweet,
What nobler spoil was ever
Cast at the Victor's feet?

What wiser master-builder
E'er wrought at Thine employ
Than he, till now so furious
Thy building to destroy?

"Lord, teach Thy Church the lesson,
Still in her darkest hour
Of weakness and of danger
To trust Thy hidden power:
Thy Grace by ways mysterious
The wrath of man can bind,
And in Thy boldest foeman
Thy chosen Saint can find." (406.)

THE PURIFICATION OF SAINT MARY THE VIRGIN

The Collect.

Almighty and ever-living God, we humbly beseech Thy Majesty, that, as Thy only-begotten Son was this day presented in the temple in substance of our flesh, so we may be presented unto Thee with pure and clean hearts by the same Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Text.—"Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me" (Ps. li. 10).

Again we are taught to remember how obedient our blessed Lord was to every command of the law. And the Gospel is full of teaching—of beautiful lessons. But I must turn to the prayer of the Collect—that we like Christ may be presented to God. (Every Jewish boy had to be presented to God, and an offering made by his mother.) And Christians have times of solemn dedication to God.

Perhaps I think of Confirmation, and how in it, not only do we receive the great gift of the Holy Spirit, but also we present ourselves before God; and, indeed, every time we are in church we present ourselves to God.

Do I think of this when I go to a service? Am I pure and clean in heart?—above all, at the Holy Communion? To be pure, to be clean in heart, that is for what one continually prays; for purity is what only God can give, and is that which God alone cares for.

One may come into His house and one may seem to be serving Him, but, unless one is cleansed in that most precious Blood, no outward service is any good in His eyes.

So it is with one's life. I may seem to be living quite a respectable life, not doing anybody any harm, and perhaps doing a good deal of work for other people. But what of my inward life? Has Christ taken possession of me? That is, after all, what purity, cleansing mean—that our Lord has come into our poor, miserable souls and is gradually making them His.

Then, as one stands before God in His house, as one presents oneself—one's soul and body—in Holy Communion to Him, He sees us weak and sinful indeed, but gradually becoming wholly Christ's, wholly pure.

Day by day I must come to Christ to receive the cleansing of His precious Blood.

He will forgive each fault, and if I feel I need full assurance of His pardon, I can hear His message of forgiveness pronounced by His ministers. Cleansed, forgiven, I can kneel at His blessed Sacrament and receive His precious Body and Blood, and go back to my work, to my struggle with my sins, perfectly certain that He is with me.

All I have to ask myself to-day is, Do I want to be cleansed? Do I want to offer and present myself to my Father in heaven? Do I use His means of grace? Do I offer my daily work, myself, all I do, all I say, to God?

"Bless'd are the pure in heart,
For they shall see our God;
The secret of the Lord is theirs,
Their soul is Christ's abode.

"The Lord, Who left the heavens
Our life and peace to bring,
To dwell in lowliness with men,
Their Pattern and their King,—

"Still to the lowly soul
He doth Himself impart,
And for His dwelling and His throne
Chooseth the pure in heart.

"Lord, we Thy Presence seek;
May ours this blessing be;
Give us a pure and lowly heart,
A temple meet for Thee." (261.)

SAINT MATTHIAS'S DAY

The Collect.

O Almighty God, Who into the place of the traitor Judas didst choose thy faithful servant Matthias to be of the number of the twelve Apostles; grant that Thy Church, being alway preserved from false Apostles, may be ordered and guided by faithful and true pastors; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Text.—"The lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven Apostles" (Acts i. 26, from the Epistle).

Of St. Matthias we only hear this one mention. I can read the story in the Epistle for to-day. The Collect thanks God for having given Matthias to take Judas's place, and prays that the Church may ever be preserved from false Apostles, and guided by true pastors.

There are many thoughts suggested by this.

First, Judas. Have I ever thought how awful a crime he committed? He was so near Jesus, yet, for the sake of money, he fell. And it is a terrible temptation now to those who have much to do with religion to grow hard unless they are really converted. Sometimes one is horribly shocked to find people who have to do with Churches and Church work, nay, even clergy, who seem to have lost all sense of the holiness of their work.

If even in the smallest way I am called to do any bit of

Church work, let me be very, very careful to pray over it, not to let myself get used to holy things and grow irreverent.

And those who go to Holy Communion are Christ's disciples. I am a communicant, or I am hoping to be one. How terrible it would be to betray Christ! It is possible Judas's sin is repeated when those who are nearest to Jesus put worldly advantage, money, getting on, in front and before Him.

Then, again, I am taught to pray for God's Church. Do I ever think about the ministers of Christ? Do I understand that our Lord chose and trained His apostles to build up His Church, and they in their turn chose others and solemnly set them apart? Do I understand that no one, not St. Paul himself, ever joined the ministry without being solemnly set apart by the laying on of hands?

Gradually the threefold order of the ministry grew up, and by degrees the Apostles' successors came to be called bishops, the second presbyters or priests, the third deacons. Always the call to this ministry came from God, and the ministers were set apart.

Still this goes on, and will go on until the Lord comes. Do I realize that it is a duty to pray for God's ministers? It is a terrible thing when an unworthy bishop or priest is set over God's fold, and this seems now, thank God, to happen very seldom. I must always remember that however unworthy the minister may be, the Sacraments are as real as if he were the holiest of saints.

Again, God's ministers are not set to be instead of the rest of us, but as it were to lead us, to represent us. Do I pray for my own bishop, for my own pastor? If not, let me begin to-day.

"Bishop of the souls of men,
When the foeman's step is nigh,

When the wolf lays wait by night
For the lambs continually,
Watch, O Lord, about us keep,
Guard us, Shepherd of the sheep.

"When the hireling flees away,
Caring only for his gold,
And the gate unguarded stands
At the entrance to the fold,
Stand, O Lord, Thy flock before,
Thou the Guardian, Thou the Door.

"Lord, Whose guiding finger ruled
In the casting of the lot,
That Thy Church might fill the throne
Of the lost Iscariot,
In our trouble, ever thus
Stand, good Master, nigh to us.

"When the Saints their order take
In the New Jerusalem,
And Matthias stands elect,
Give us part and lot with him,
Where in Thine own dwelling-place
We may witness face to face." (408.)

THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

The Collect.

We beseech Thee, O Lord, pour Thy grace into our hearts; that, as we have known the Incarnation of Thy Son Jesus Christ by the message of an angel, so by His Cross and Passion we may be brought unto the glory of His resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Text.—"Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to Thy Word" (St. Luke i. 38).

This is a beautiful Collect for a beautiful day. Our Lady, the blessed Virgin, the mother of our Lord, received her call to her wonderful vocation. If I read the Gospel and the morning's Second Lesson I shall have the lovely story of the Virgin's call, of her thanksgiving.

And the Collect prays that God will pour grace, that is, send very much grace and help, into our hearts, that as we have heard of His wonderful birth, so by His Cross, His sufferings, we may come to His resurrection. This applies to our life in Christ.

First, Jesus our Lord takes possession of our souls, then He leads us to share in His Cross, then He makes us share His risen life, first on earth, finally in heaven. The Incarnation—that is, our Lord's becoming Man—is the beginning of everything in Christianity—for the Church, for the individual Christian, for the world.

Jesus made Man is our hope. Jesus makes every human hope, every human occupation, every state of life, holy. Because He has lived a life on earth, all work, all sweet human relationships, every state of life, is hallowed. He has made work and poverty beautiful. But there is the Cross. Yes, I can feel that my earthly life is hallowed because I belong to Jesus ; but I am His, and therefore I must be like Him. The blessed Virgin herself had to bear sharp sorrow, to become the Mother of Sorrows. So every Christian has to tread, like Christ, the way of suffering.

No one can escape the Cross.

"Turn whither thou wilt, God has called thee to follow Him, and a cross, be it what it may, must thou bear after Him ; if thou flee from one, another perhaps heavier will weigh thee down," says an old writer.[1]

Christ bought us by His Cross and Passion ; we must share in that Passion. This day seems to link the joy of Christmas with the sad days of Holy Week, and beyond we see Easter.

Then we are to share in His resurrection.

Even here we are to be brought into joy. We may have to bear a heavy cross, but the risen Lord is with us to bear in us. Only by believing in Jesus as true Man, our Elder Brother, our Incarnate Lord, only by willingly sharing His sufferings, can we come to the joy of His resurrection in this life and in the life beyond.

Do these words mean anything to me? Do I take home to myself the joy, the reality of my Saviour—God and Man? Do I try to bear the daily trials of my life, and all the great sorrows and pain the Lord lays on me, as for Him? Do I ever think about what He bore for me? Shall I not try to think of Him more this coming Holy Week?

And am I trying to lead the risen life—the life of a Chris-

[1] Tauler, translated by M.C.C.

tian who has died to sin? If I look at the Epistle for Easter Day, I shall see how St. Paul describes it. And do I know that because our Lord bore that Cross and Passion and rose again, I may share in His resurrection because I belong to Him? Do I believe in the life of the world to come? Lady Day is full of teaching, and perhaps the greatest lesson is the giving up of ourselves to the Lord as His blessed Mother did, to accept, and do, and bear His holy will.

SAINT MARK'S DAY

The Collect.

O Almighty God, Who hast instructed Thy holy Church with the heavenly doctrine of Thy Evangelist Saint Mark; give us grace, that, being not like children carried away with every blast of vain doctrine, we may be established in the truth of Thy holy Gospel; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Text.—"Now I make known unto you, brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you" (1 Cor. xv. 1).

St. Mark, as I learn from the Acts of the Apostles, was the nephew of St. Barnabas, and I remember how, on the first of St. Paul's missionary tours, St. Mark's courage failed, and he left his leaders.

He was restored to St. Paul's confidence, and it is believed he wrote his Gospel under St. Peter's direction. St. Mark's Gospel is the earliest of the four, and is very simple and direct, full of little touches which make one realize the story.

Can I join in the thanksgiving for the Gospel which the Collect puts on my lips to-day? Do I love the Gospel story? Do I try to read it? Have I ever read the Gospels through? Nothing is better than to read the second Morning Lesson every day and the second Evening Lesson also, if possible, and then one reads the New Testament through twice a

year. Even one lesson would take one through the New Testament in the year. And if I feel I cannot read so much, why cannot I take a book of the New Testament and read a few verses regularly every day, or on Sundays or some one week-day, always having a book of the New Testament on hand? By degrees I shall grow to love the Gospel story, if I will pray over my reading.

And the prayer of the Collect, "That being not like children carried away," etc.

There are people who are very easily upset in their religious beliefs. They have no very settled convictions, and every fresh teacher attracts them. They do not continue in the truth. We pray that we may be established in the truth of the Gospel.

Now what does this word Gospel mean? Gospel means good news. And this good news means the facts of our Lord's birth, His life, death, resurrection, ascension; of the gift of the Holy Ghost, of the setting up of the Church, of the forgiveness which man can now obtain, and of the life to come.

The Gospel means the set of facts about our Lord, as St. Paul says in the text which is at the beginning of this meditation.

And these facts about our Lord, if they are believed and taken home to our hearts, change our lives. Those who believe in Jesus, Perfect God and Perfect Man, risen, ascended, ever present with us, cannot listen to vain (which means empty) teaching about religion—teachers who would draw us away from belief in Christ, or who would try to make us believe our Lord did not mean what He said about the Sacraments, or about the awful consequences of sin, and so on.

Am I like a child easily attracted by new teachers? Do I run about from church to church and from Christian

worship to meetings where Christ is not worshipped, but where people are told they can be saved without Christ?

There is really nothing which is likely to get one into the temper of mind which is carried away by wrong teaching so much as the habit of running about from church to chapel, from one church to another, because the music is nice in one place, the preacher good in another, or because I may get some worldly advantage by going sometimes to a third. To go to any place of worship, or to forsake one's own Church out of curiosity, is utterly wrong, is putting oneself into temptation of being carried away by wrong teaching. If any of these practices are temptations to me, let me feel this Collect has a special lesson for me.

"Behold the messengers of Christ,
Who bear to every place
The unveiled mysteries of God,
The Gospel of His grace.

"The things through mists and shadows dim
By holy prophets seen,
In the full light of day they saw,
With not a cloud between.

"What Christ, true Man, divinely wrought,
What God in Manhood bore,
They wrote, as God inspired, in words
That live for evermore." (433.)

SAINT PHILIP AND SAINT JAMES'S DAY

The Collect.

O Almighty God, Whom truly to know is everlasting life; grant us perfectly to know Thy Son Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life; that, following the steps of Thy holy Apostles, Saint Philip and Saint James, we may stedfastly walk in the way that leadeth to eternal life; through the same Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Text.—"I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE" (from to-day's Gospel).

Our Lord says He is the Way, the Truth, the Life. Not that He is *like* a way, or that He tells the truth, or that He gives us life, but He *is* all this.

And to know God is to have life eternal. Do I remember the second Collect at Morning Prayer "in knowledge of Whom (God) standeth our eternal life"? That is, our life is knowing God.

And to-day's Collect prays for this—that we may know our Lord to be our Life, and that we may follow the steps of His Apostles, walking on to eternal life. What does this mean for me?

Surely this: above all other things, above all wishes for money, for getting on, for pleasure, God must come; that to be turned to Him is the one important thing in life. Jesus our Lord Himself brings us to God. To come to Him and lay before His Cross all one's sins, to be taught by

Him how to live one's life, not living it in any other way than the way He lays down, to eat His Flesh and drink His Blood with faith, this is to know Jesus; and because we know Jesus we know God. Jesus has taught us that we have a Father in heaven, and a Holy Spirit sent to us to guide us.

How does a Christian grow in knowing God? By prayer and thinking over God's Word with prayer, and by Holy Communion, we do grow in the knowledge of God. A man or woman who never prays, never reads the Bible, never kneels in faith at the altar, knows nothing of God. He or she cannot understand the language a Christian talks. If one wants to be ready for God in the life beyond the grave, one must begin the heavenly life here on earth.

To *know* God—how strange it sounds!

Yet it is possible, here on earth, for all Christians, for *me*. To learn to pray is the work of a whole life; yet any child can pray; and to pray teaches us little by little to know Him for oneself as one's Father, one's Elder Brother, one's Sanctifier.

And so this is the lesson of to-day's Collect.

Jesus Christ is for us, as He was for the Apostles, the living Master—the Way, the Truth, the Life.

It is not a dead Christ, or a Saviour far, far away, but a Christ Who comes to me, to Whom I must give myself—a living personal Saviour. That is to know Jesus.

Do I know Him? If not, why not?

Lord Jesus, make me know Thee; show me by the Holy Spirit my sins; but show me my Saviour, even Thyself, O Lord the Saviour.

"Thou art the Way; by Thee alone
From sin and death we flee:
And he who would the Father seek
Must seek Him, Lord, by Thee.

"Thou art the Truth; Thy Word alone
True wisdom can impart;
Thou only canst inform the mind
And purify the heart.

"Thou art the Life; the rending tomb
Proclaims Thy conquering arm;
And those who put their trust in Thee
Nor death nor hell shall harm.

"Thou art the Way, the Truth, the Life;
Grant us that Way to know,
That Truth to keep, that Life to win,
Whose joys eternal flow." (199.)

THE END.

A. R. MOWBRAY AND CO. LTD., OXFORD AND LONDON.

ST. DEINIOL'S
HAWARDEN
LIBRARY

081962

ANDREWS & CO.
BOOKSELLERS
&
STATIONERS